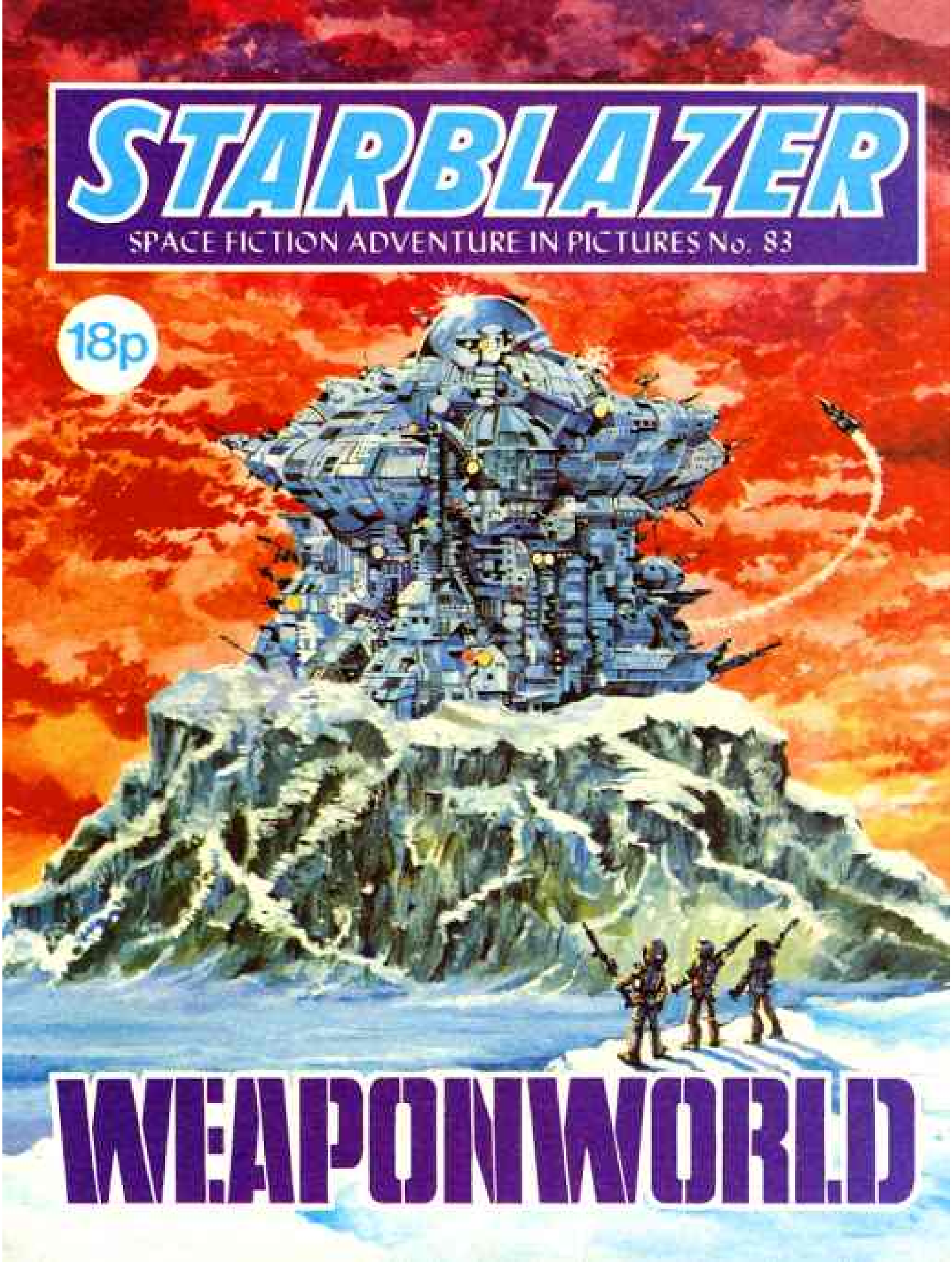
STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 83

18p



WEAPONWORLD

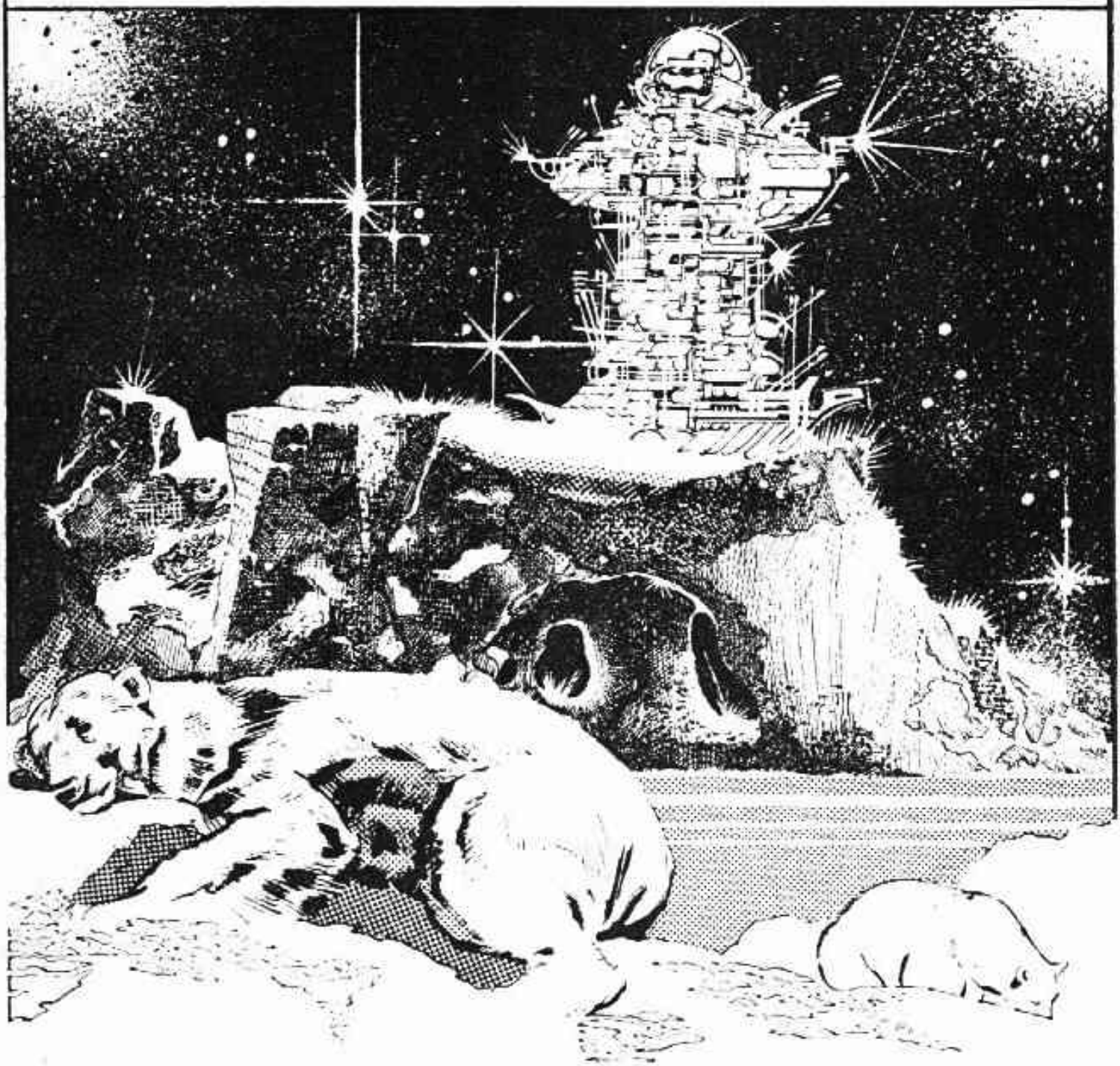
STARBLAZER

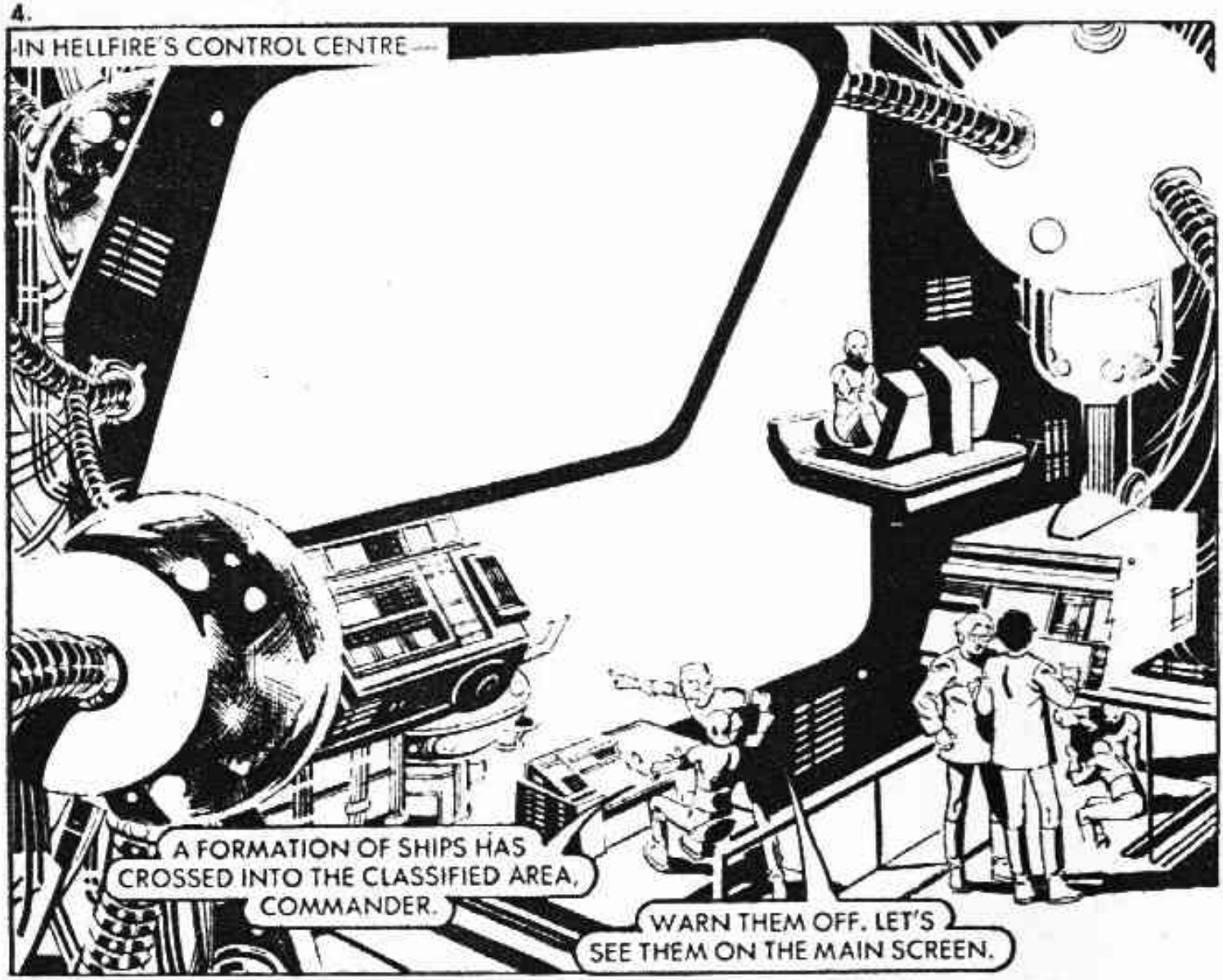
AFTER CENTURIES OF CONFLICT AND ARMS DEVELOPMENT, THE COUNTRIES OF EARTH AGREED TO END THE WEAPONS' RACE.

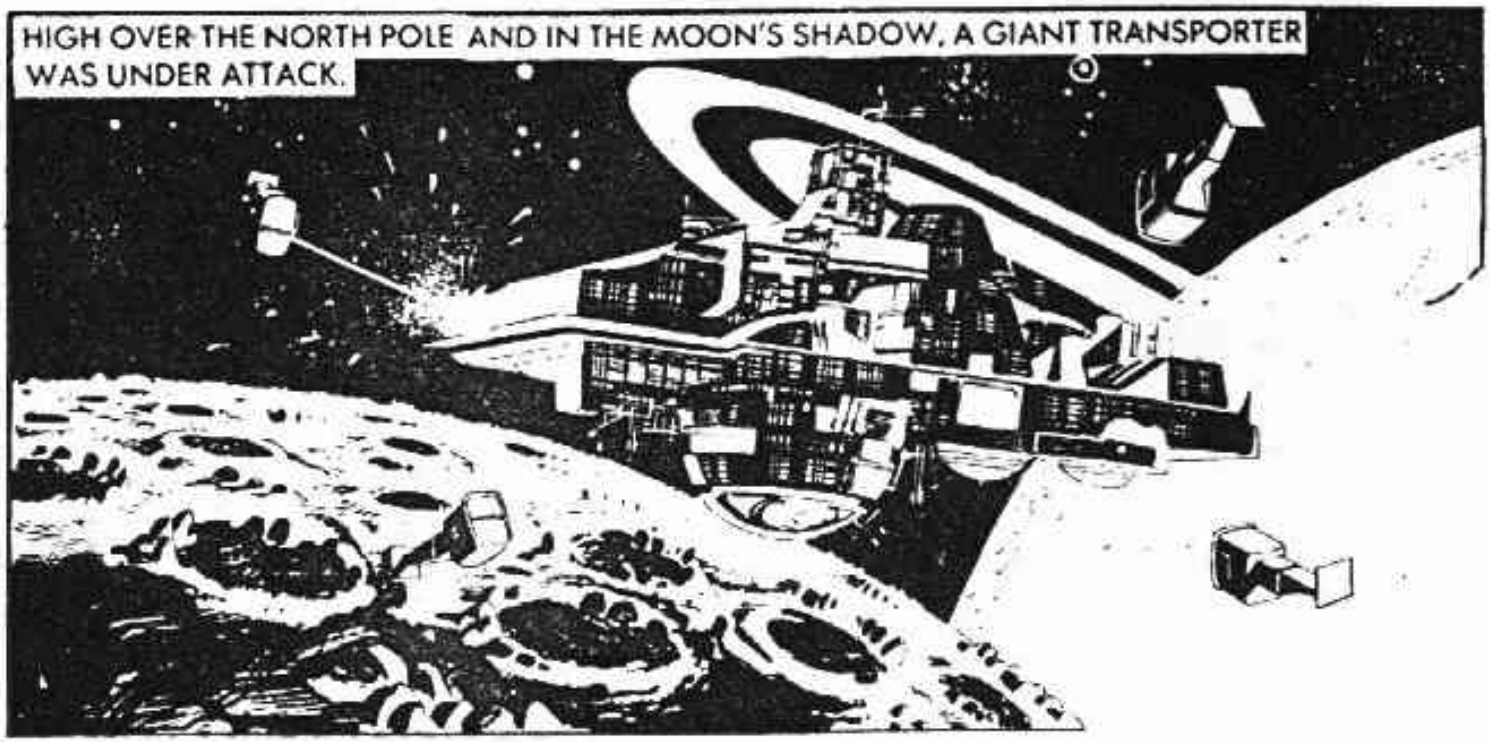
BUT ONE PROBLEM REMAINED. WHAT COULD BE DONE WITH WEAPONS THAT COULD NOT BE SAFELY DESTROYED? THE ONLY ANSWER WAS TO CONSTRUCT A STORE FOR THEM UNTIL SUCH TIME AS A SAFE METHOD COULD BE FOUND TO DISPOSE OF THEM. THE ARCTIC WAS CHOSEN, AND THE STORE OF DECAYING DEATH WAS CALLED HELLFIRE.

WEAPONWORLD

HELLFIRE GLEAMED ICILY ON TOP OF ITS STORE OF DEATH. DEEP WITHIN ITS CAVERNS, UNSEEN CREWS SCANNED SPACE LOOKING FOR ANY THREAT TO THE VAST WEAPONWORLD.




IN HELLFIRE'S CONTROL CENTRE ---
A FORMATION OF SHIPS HAS CROSSED INTO THE CLASSIFIED AREA, COMMANDER.
WARN THEM OFF. LET'S SEE THEM ON THE MAIN SCREEN.


HIGH OVER THE NORTH POLE AND IN THE MOON'S SHADOW, A GIANT TRANSPORTER WAS UNDER ATTACK.

DISTRESS SIGNAL FROM THE TRANSPORTER, SIR. UNDER ATTACK FROM RENEGADES.
MOBILISE THE FLEET.
XS45

WITHIN SECONDS HELLFIRE'S DEFENSIVE FLEET WAS ON ITS WAY TO HELP THE TRANSPORTER.

AS THE SPACERS TACKLED THE PIRATE SHIPS, THE TRANSPORTER HEADED FOR SAFETY.
RENEGADES ENGAGED!

SUDDENLY THE GIANT SHIP SPLINTERED INTO A HORDE OF SMALLER VESSELS

ATTACK! ATTACK!

ON THE WEAPONWORLD OF HELLFIRE —
COMMANDER, WE'RE UNDER ATTACK! THAT TRANSPORTER JUST DUMPED AN INVASION FORCE ON US.
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING UNTIL WE'VE DEALT WITH THE PIRATES UP HERE—HOLD THEM OFF AS LONG AS YOU CAN.

THE ATTACKERS SWEPT OUT OF THE CRAFT OPPOSED BY ONLY A HANDFUL OF GUARDS.
FIND THE STARFIRE CANNON!
AT THAT MOMENT ON HELLFIRE—
SIR . . . WE CAN'T HOLD HELLFIRE MUCH LONGER.
THEN WE MUST DESTROY IT.

THE EARTH FIGHTERS WERE UNDER PRESSURE—
DON'T LET UP! WE MUST CLEAR THE LANES AROUND EARTH BEFORE WE TURN BACK TO HELP HELLFIRE.

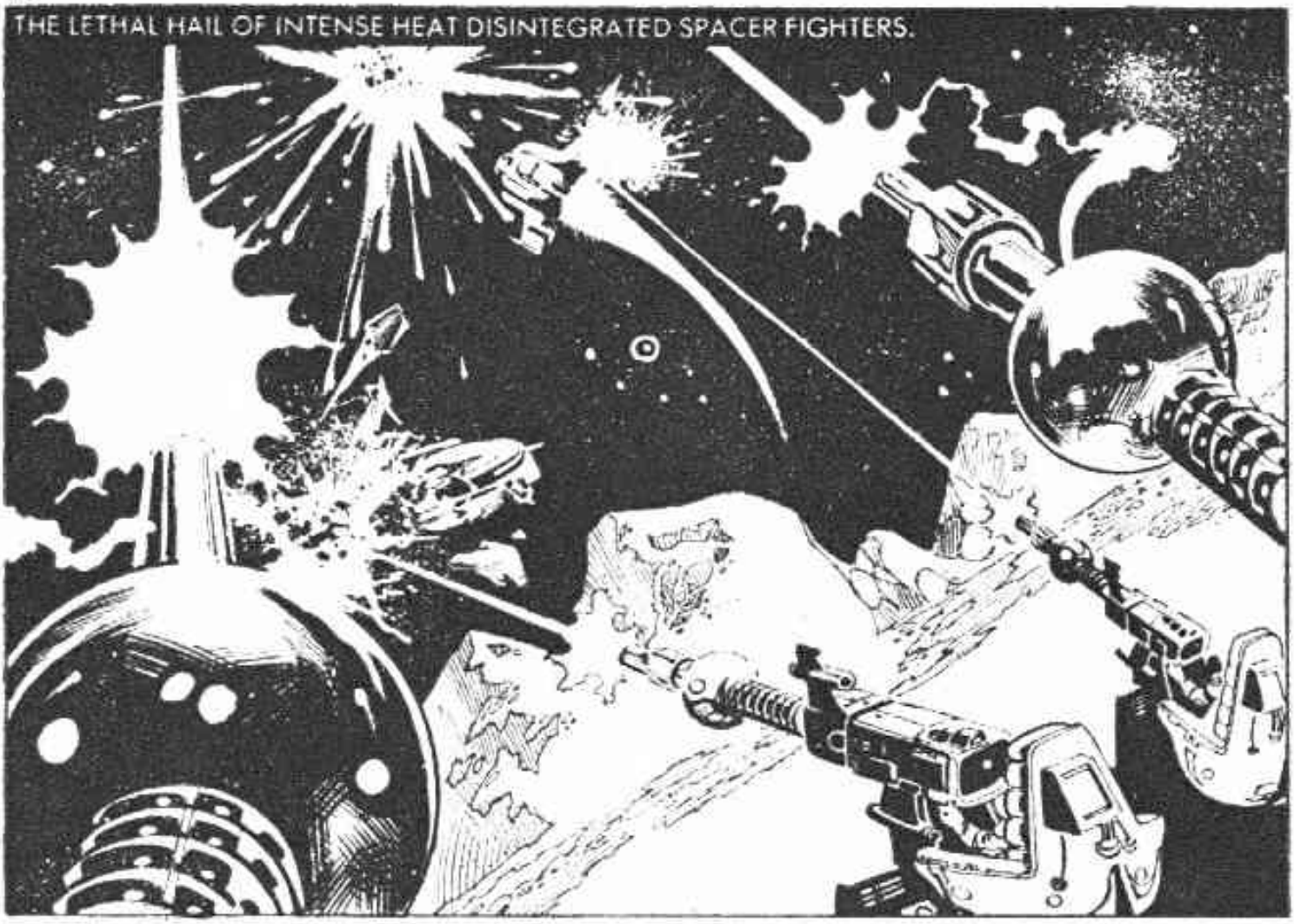
MEANWHILE THE ATTACKERS HAD BREACHED THE OUTER DEFENCES OF HELLFIRE, AND REACHED THE STARFIRE CANNON.
KILL THE GUARDS!

IN SPACE THE RENEGADES WERE INFLICTING HEAVY LOSSES.
ON AN ATTACKER'S CRAFT—
ARE THE STARFIRE CANNON IN PLACE?

TRAJAN, THE ATTACKER'S LEADER HAD THE DEADLY STARFIRE CANNON WAITING FOR THE SPACER FLEET.
AFFIRMITIVE!! STAND BY.

THE REMAINDER OF THE SPACER FLEET TURNED TO DESTROY HELLFIRE—

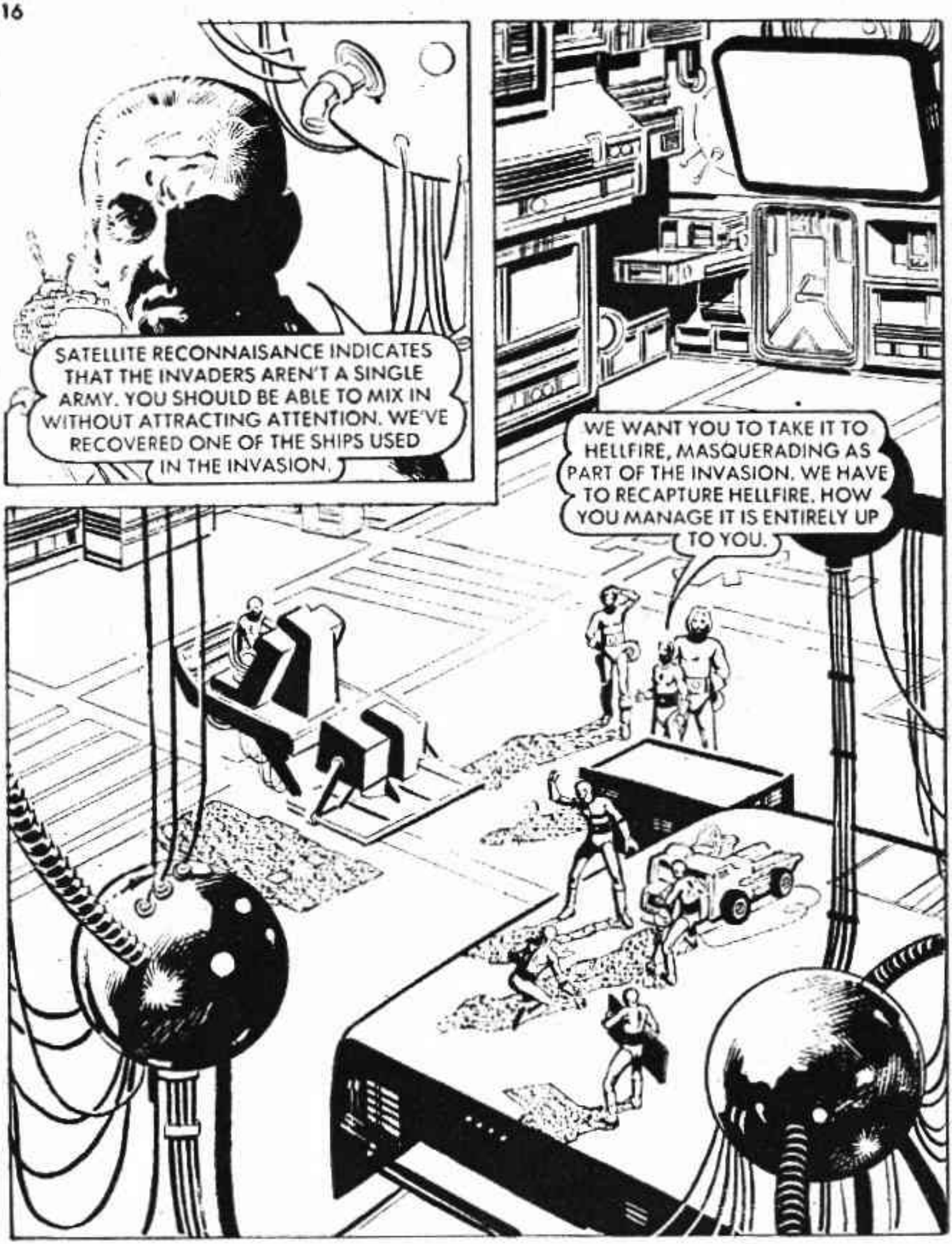
THEY'RE WITHIN RANGE. OPEN FIRE!
206
THE SPACER BATTLESHIPS DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE.

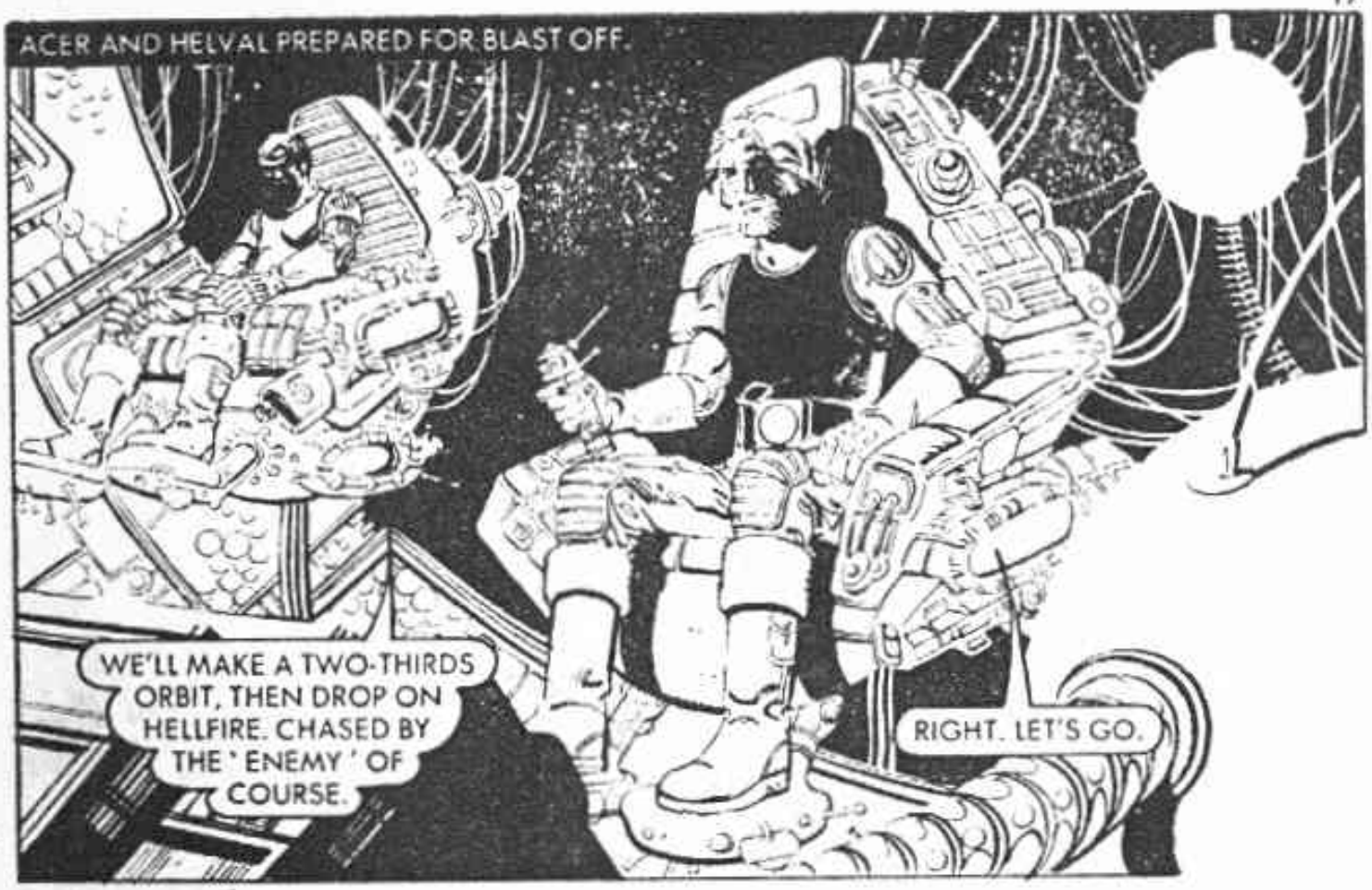

THE LETHAL HAIL OF INTENSE HEAT DISINTEGRATED SPACER FIGHTERS.

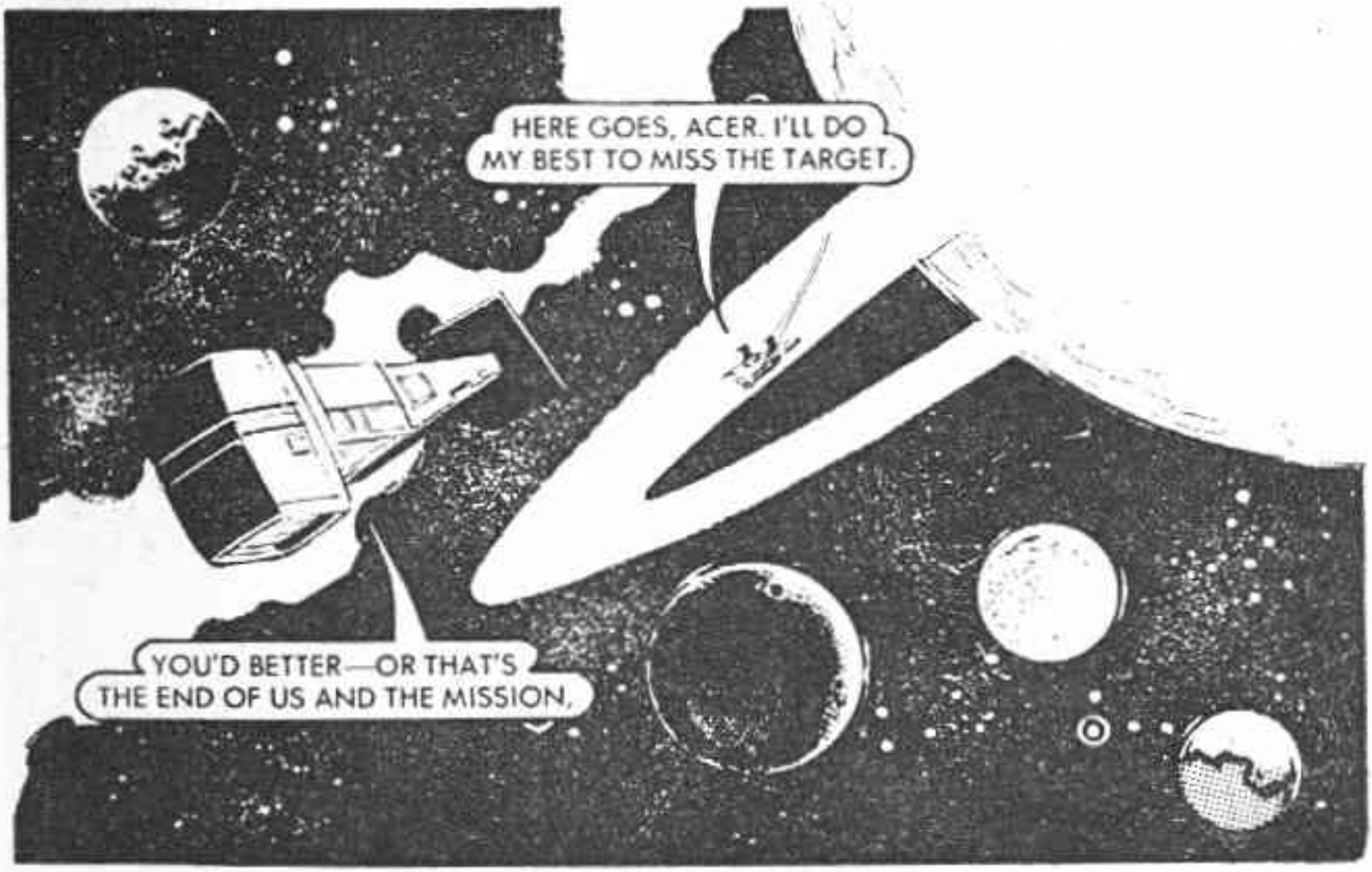
ABORT ATTACK . . . RETURN TO GANDAR.
THE SURVIVORS OF THE MASSACRE BROKE OFF THE ATTACK.

AT SPACE CORPS HQ, GANDAR, THE SPACE ADMINISTRATOR WAS INFORMED OF THE DISASTER.
THERE YOU HAVE IT, SIR. WE SIMPLY COULD NOT REGAIN HELLFIRE.

THE SPACE ADMINISTRATOR CALLED IN TWO AGENTS—
ACER, HELVAL, YOU'RE THE TWO MOST EXPERIENCED AGENTS WE HAVE. THEREFORE I'M COMMITTING YOU IN A RAID ON HELLFIRE— PERHAPS TWO MEN WILL HAVE BETTER FORTUNE THAN A FLEET. IT'S A RISKY IDEA.
HOW DO YOU WANT US TO TACKLE IT, SIR?


SATELLITE RECONNAISANCE INDICATES THAT THE INVADERS AREN'T A SINGLE ARMY. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO MIX IN WITHOUT ATTRACTING ATTENTION. WE'VE RECOVERED ONE OF THE SHIPS USED IN THE INVASION.
WE WANT YOU TO TAKE IT TO HELLFIRE, MASQUERADING AS PART OF THE INVASION. WE HAVE TO RECAPTURE HELLFIRE. HOW YOU MANAGE IT IS ENTIRELY UP TO YOU.

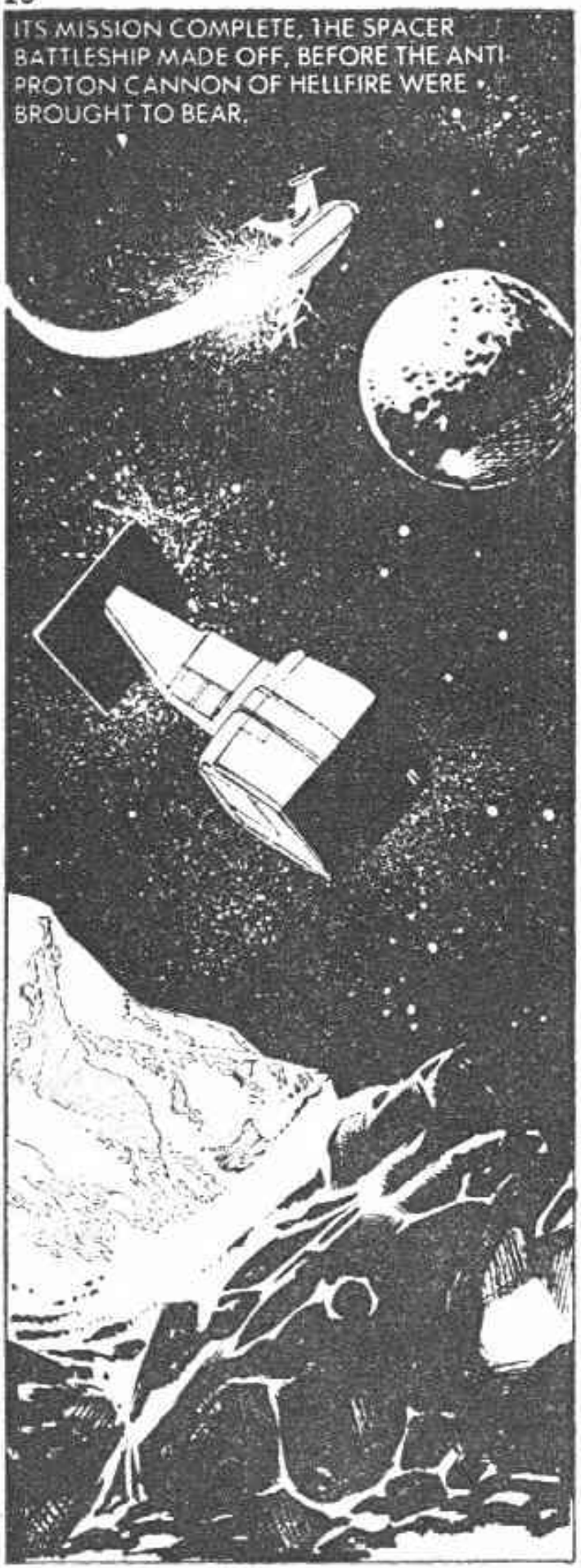

ACER AND HELVAL PREPARED FOR BLAST OFF.
WE'LL MAKE A TWO-THIRDS ORBIT, THEN DROP ON HELLFIRE. CHASED BY THE 'ENEMY' OF COURSE.
RIGHT. LET'S GO.

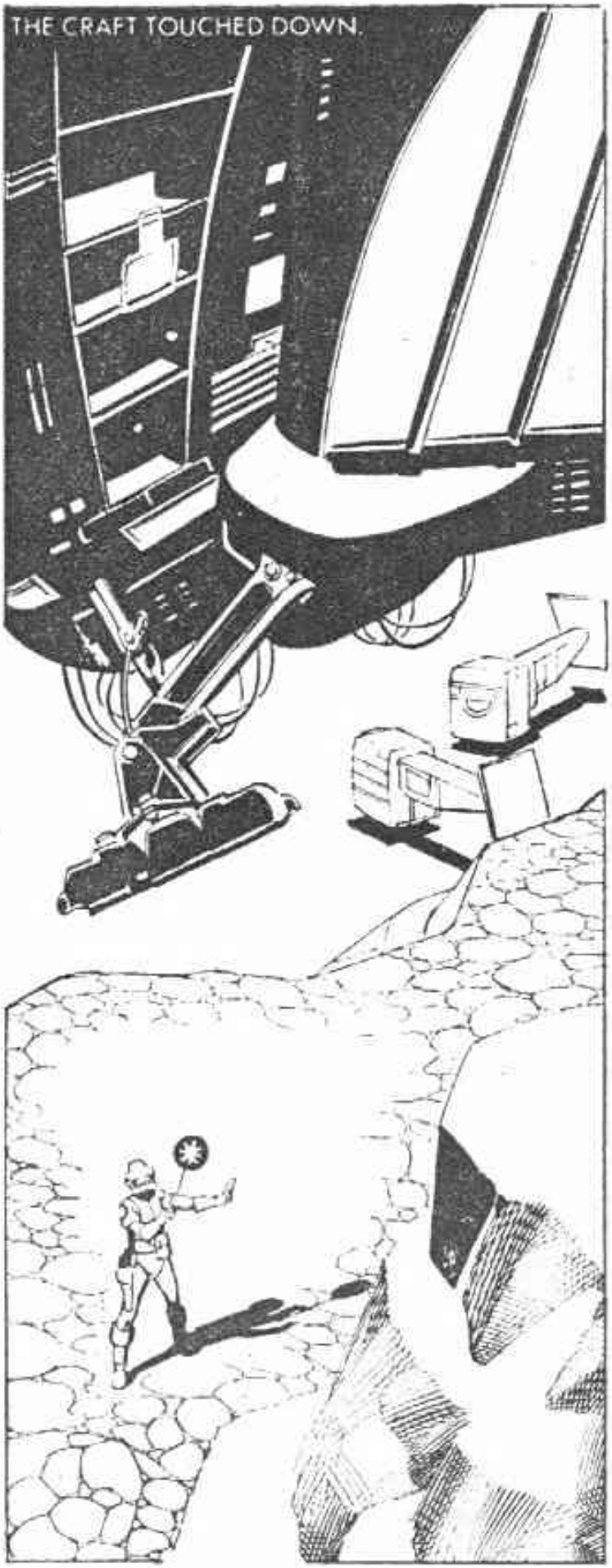

HERE GOES, ACER. I'LL DO MY BEST TO MISS THE TARGET.
YOU'D BETTER—OR THAT'S THE END OF US AND THE MISSION.

ACER AND HELVAL SPED INTO THE HELLFIRE TRACKING AREA—
ON HELLFIRE, THE LEADER, TRAJAN, WAS WATCHING—
747
WEREN'T ALL OUR SHIPS ACCOUNTED FOR?
NO, TRAJAN. ONE HAS BEEN OUT OF CONTACT SINCE WE LANDED. THAT IS IT COMING IN NOW.

71
20
DEPLOY THE ANTI-PROTON CANNON TO RUN THAT SPACER BATTLESHIP OFF.

I THINK THEY'VE HAD A GOOD LOOK AT US, NOW. YOU CAN TELL OUR PURSUER TO BREAK OFF.
RIGHT!


ITS MISSION COMPLETE, THE SPACER BATTLESHIP MADE OFF, BEFORE THE ANTI-PROTON CANNON OF HELLFIRE WERE BROUGHT TO BEAR.

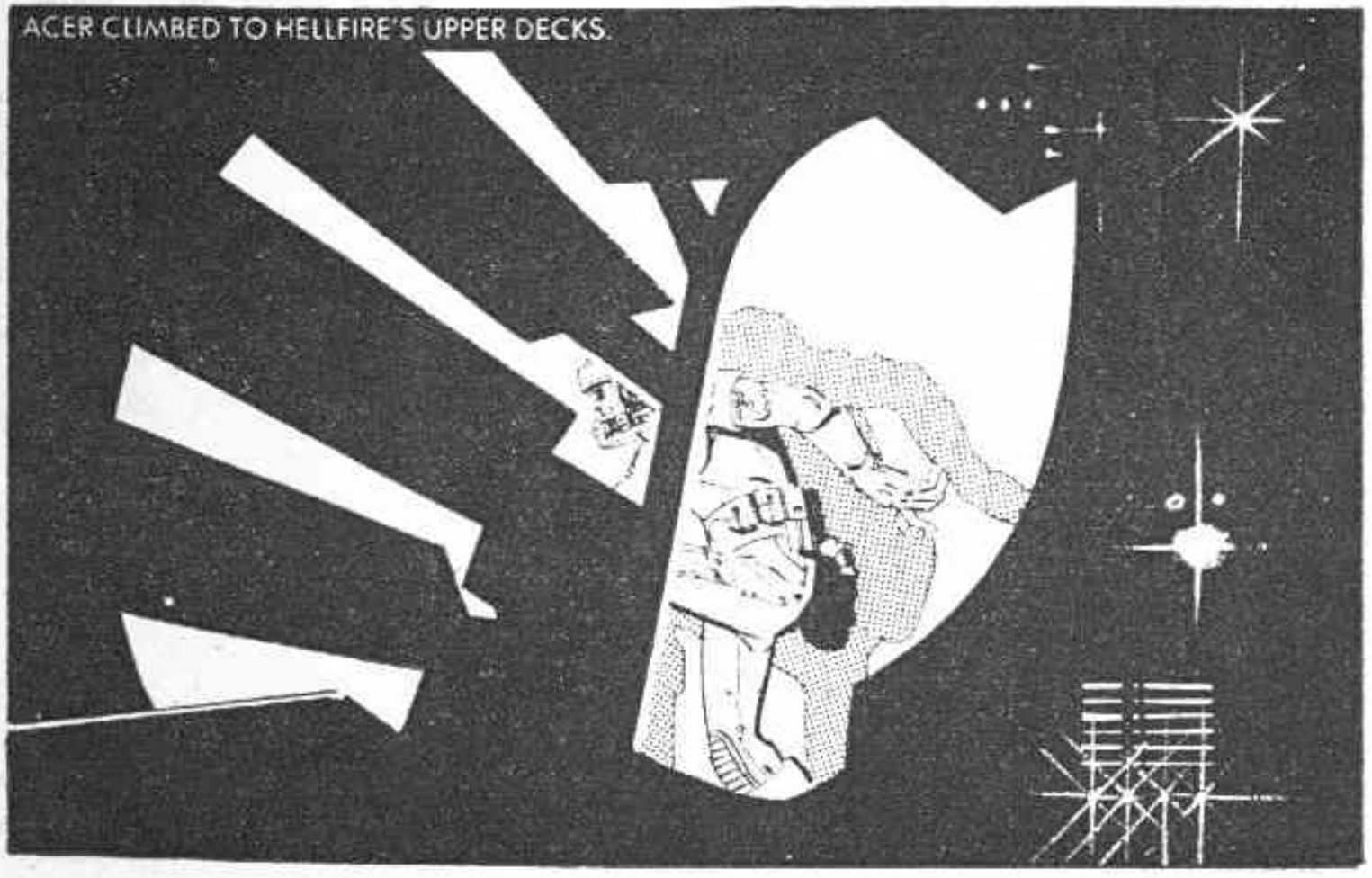

THE CRAFT TOUCHED DOWN.

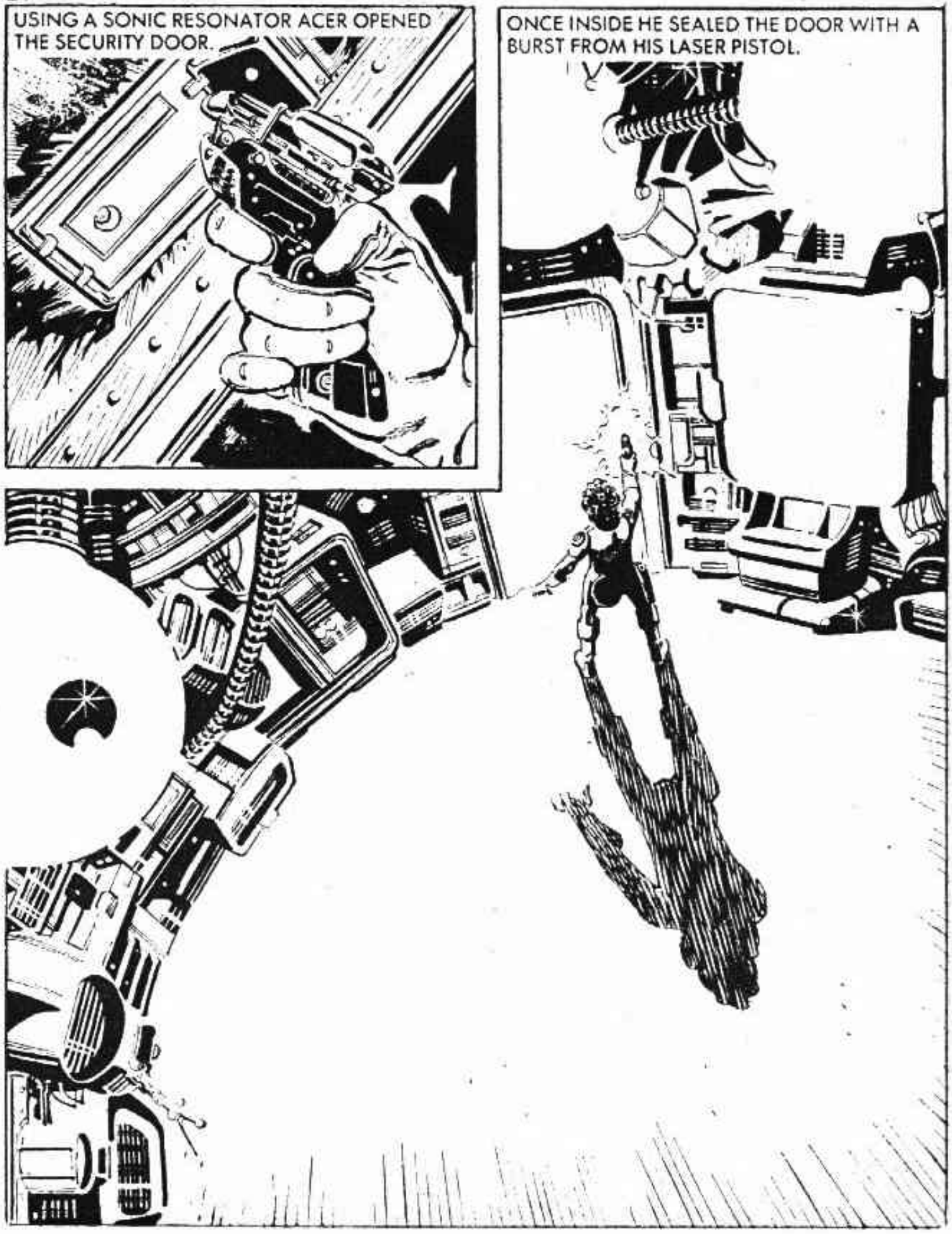
38
SLIGHT DAMAGE TO OUR INNER HULL, AS THE MOTHER SHIP SPLIT UP—WE HAD TO LIE LOW ON LUNA TILL WE MADE REPAIRS, AND THE FUSS HAD DIED DOWN.

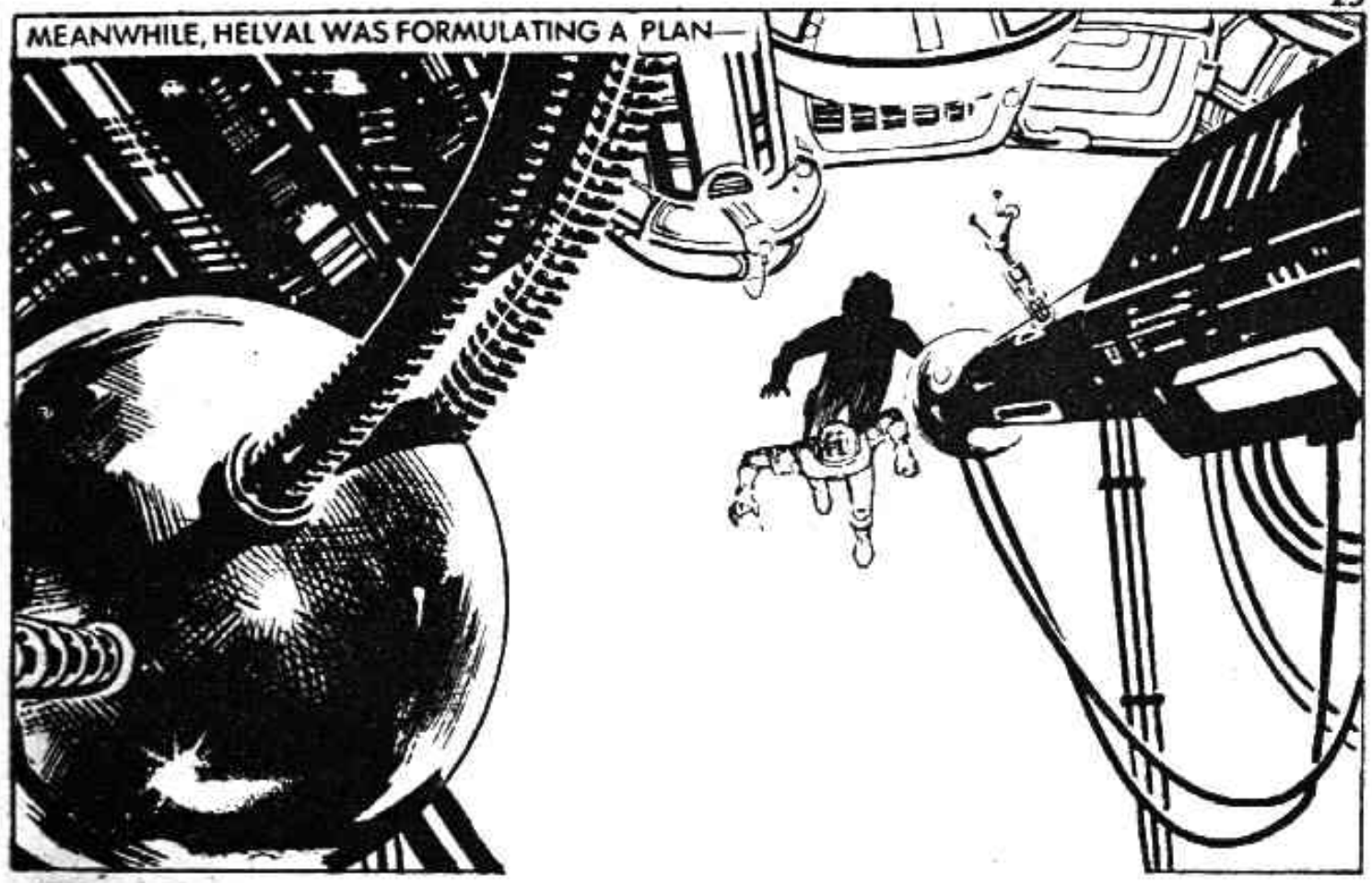
YOU'D BETTER GET IN HERE, QUICKLY. TRAJAN'S STARTED EXPLAINING WHAT THE MISSION'S ALL ABOUT.

TRAJAN ADDRESSED HIS ARMY.
OUR ALIEN FRIEND HERE RELEASED US FROM THE PENAL COLONIES AT THE EDGE OF THE GALAXY—TO TAKE HELLFIRE. NOW WE CAN CONTROL THIS SECTOR OF THE GALAXY. HELLFIRE'S FIELD OF FIRE IS WIDE ENOUGH TO COVER THE MAIN SPACE LANES. EARTH CAN BE CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE EMPIRE.
OUR ALIEN FRIEND, GANTHUI, HAS A BATTLE-FLEET POURING INTO OUR GALAXY. AS YOU KNOW, SHIPS ARE BLIND FOR A FEW SECONDS AFTER COMING OUT OF TIMEWARP . . . SO OUR JOB IS TO PIN DOWN THE EARTH FLEET, AND GIVE THE VESSELS TIME TO ADJUST.

ACER AND HELVAL PLOTTED —
I'LL TRY AND DENY TRAJAN'S FORCES USE OF THE INNER ARSENALS. SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THE PROTON CANNON OUTSIDE.

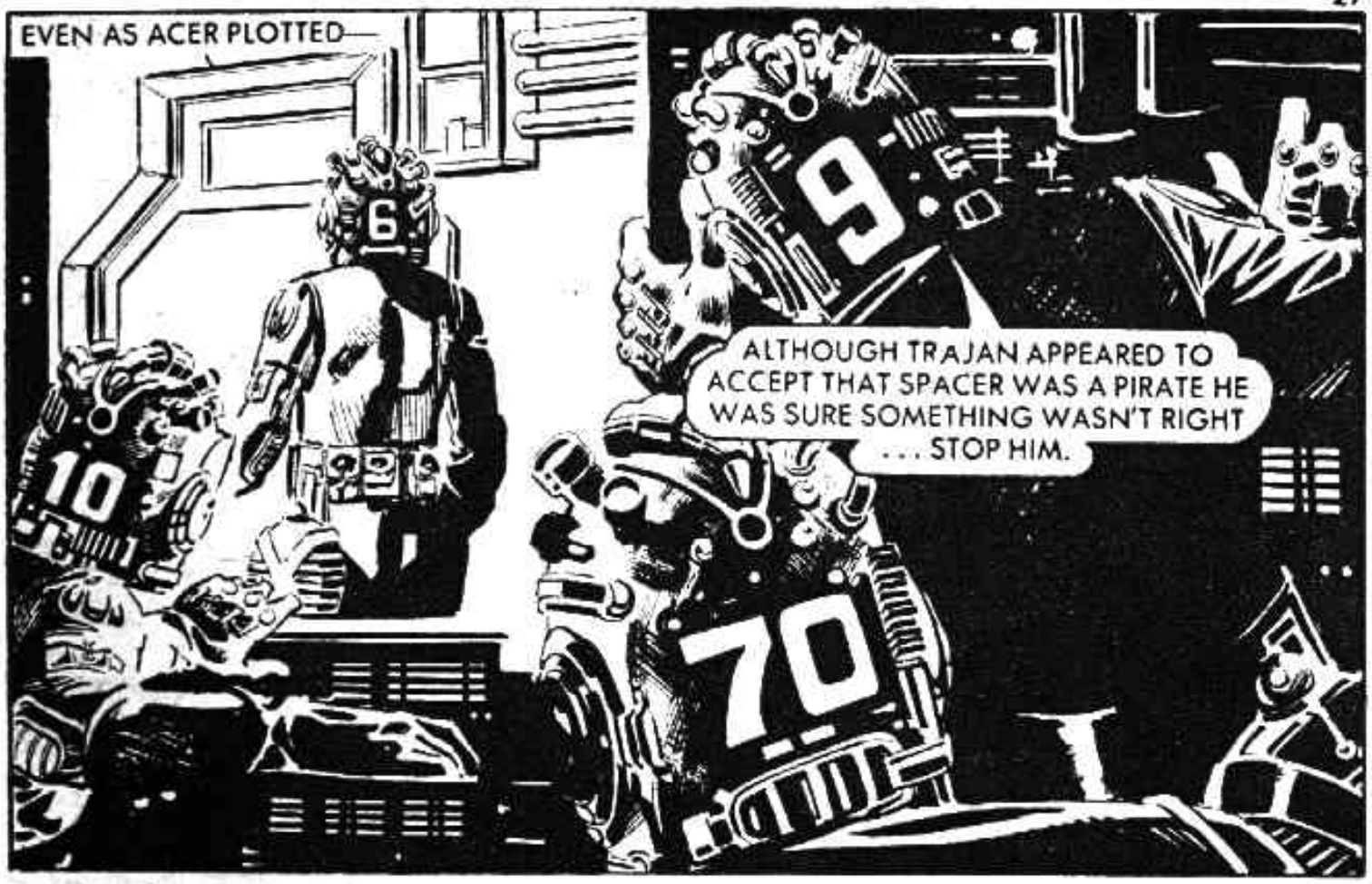

ACER CLIMBED TO HELLFIRE'S UPPER DECKS.


USING A SONIC RESONATOR ACER OPENED THE SECURITY DOOR.
ONCE INSIDE HE SEALED THE DOOR WITH A BURST FROM HIS LASER PISTOL.


MEANWHILE, HELVAL WAS FORMULATING A PLAN—

REPORTING FOR DUTY, SIR. I'M A GUNNER . . . PROTON CANNON ARE MY SPECIALITY.
RIGHT . . . GUN 7 . . . NOW!!!

HELVAL'S POST WAS OUTSIDE THE WEAPONWORLD —
SATURN . . . IT'S COLD OUT HERE.
ACER WAS WORKING OUT HOW TO SABOTAGE THE ARSENAL.

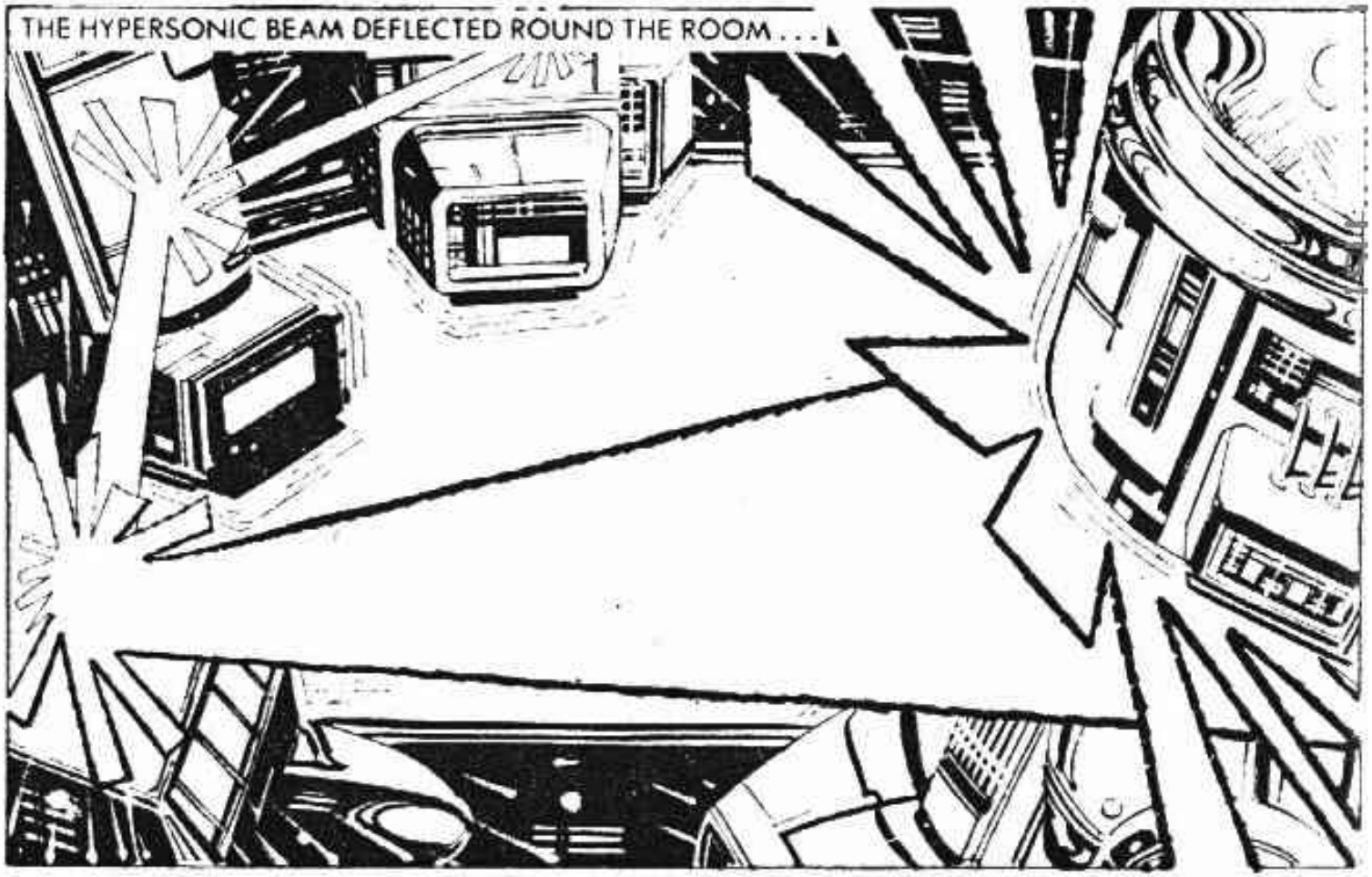

EVEN AS ACER PLOTTED—
ALTHOUGH TRAJAN APPEARED TO ACCEPT THAT SPACER WAS A PIRATE HE WAS SURE SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT . . . STOP HIM.

FREEZE . . . OR YOUR BRAINS GET VAPED.
SPACE! I MUST HAVE BEEN WATCHED.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE WARNED ME.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY MORE THERE ARE, BUT I'M STAYING UNDER COVER UNTIL I FIND OUT.

THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!
HE'S GOT A HYPERSONIC CANNON.
70
ACER'S ARMOUR TOOK THE MAIN BRUNT OF THE HYDERSONIC CANNON BLAST.

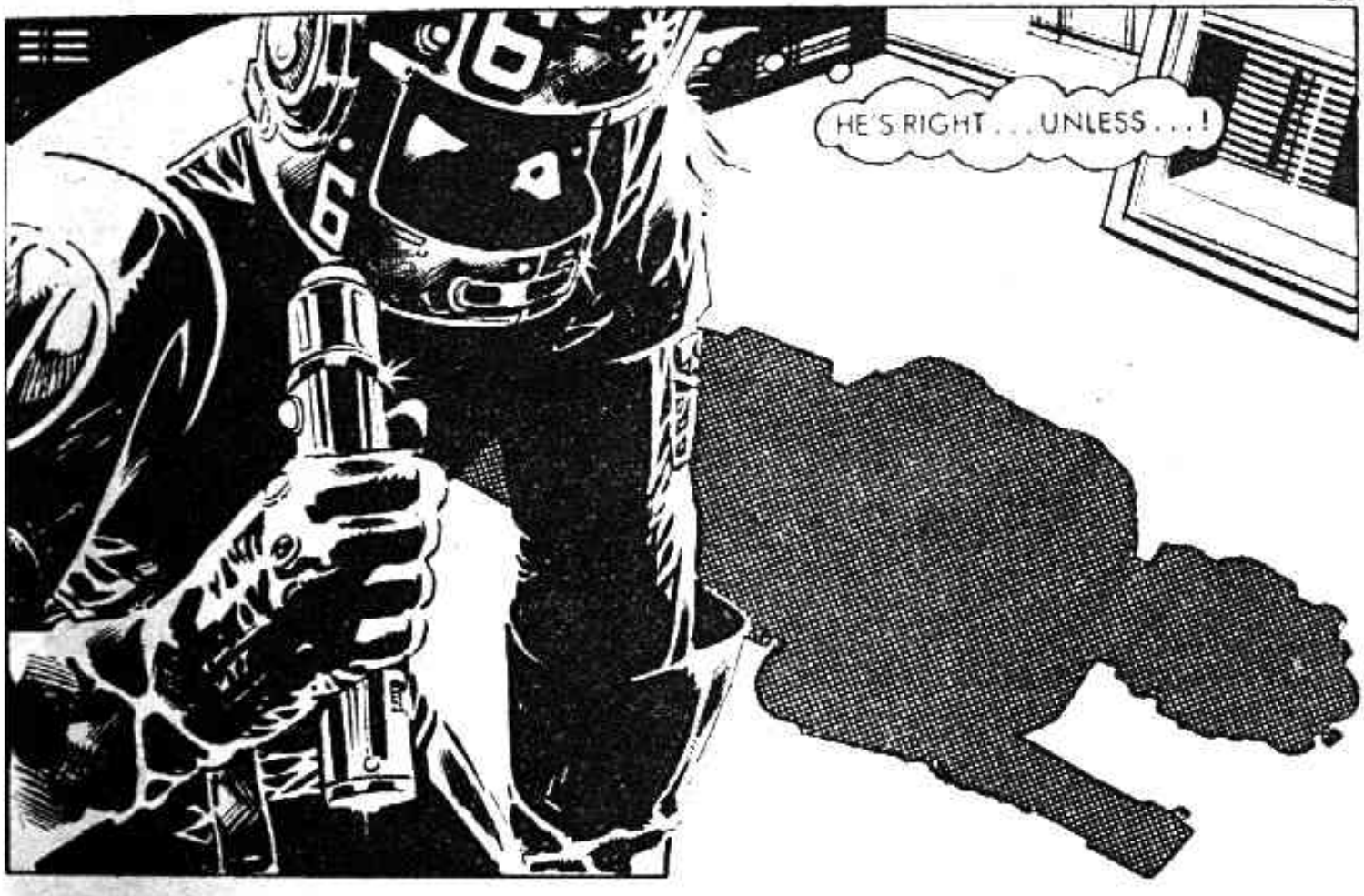
THE PLATES OF ACER'S ARMOUR, VIBRATING AT DIFFERENT FREQUENCIES, PROTECTED HIM, ALTHOUGH THE FORCE THREW HIM TO THE GROUND.

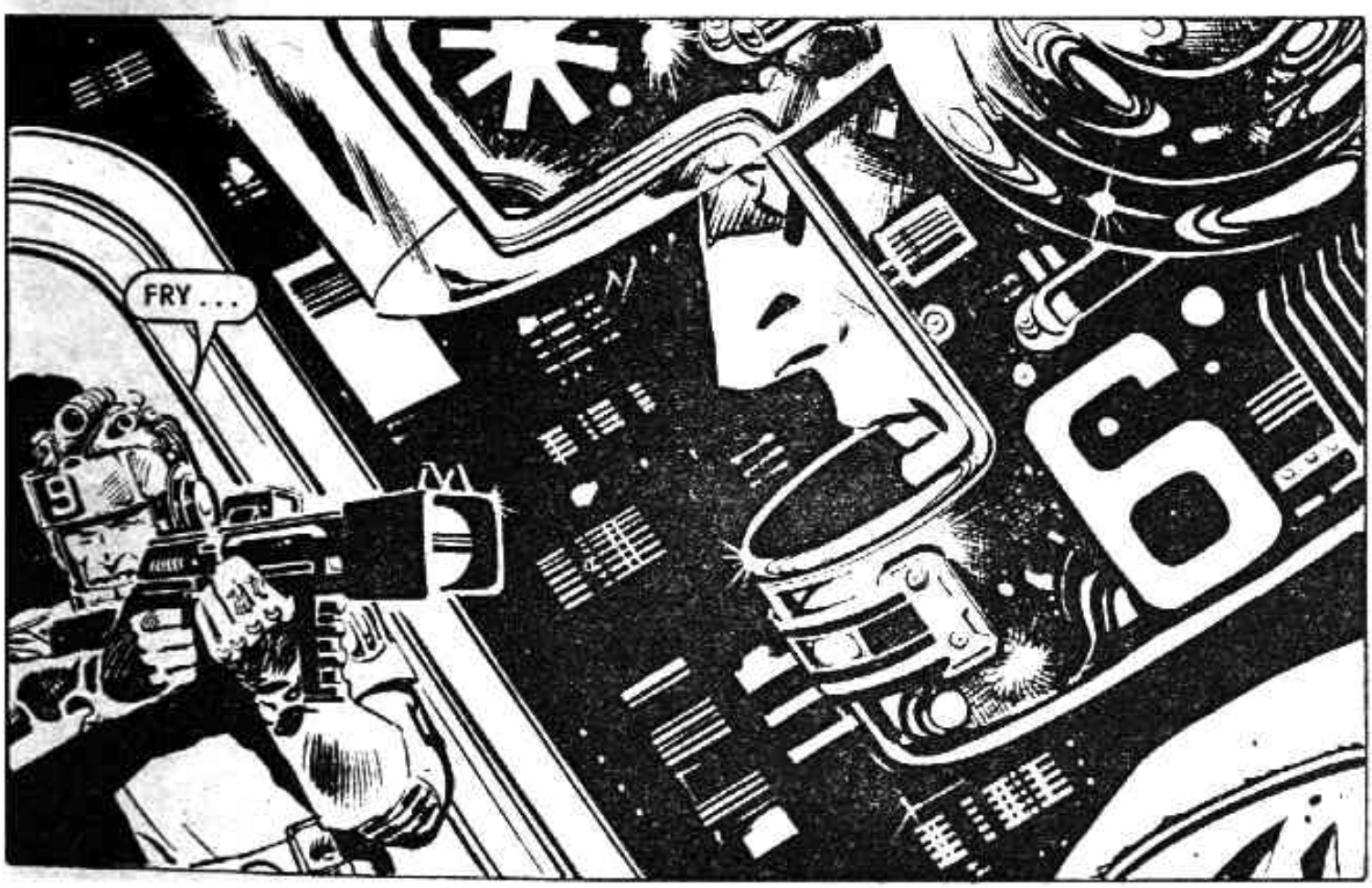

THE HYPERSONIC BEAM DEFLECTED ROUND THE ROOM . . .

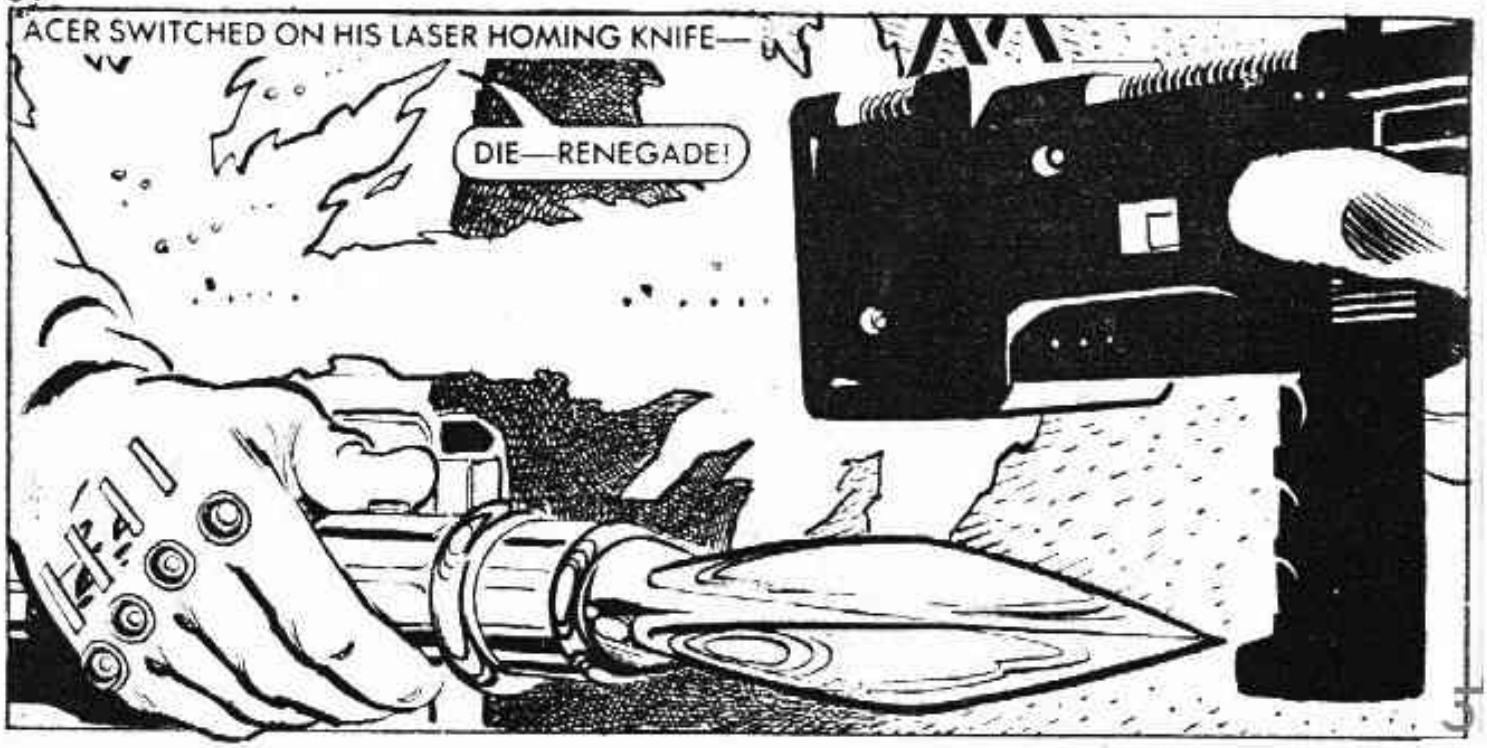
. . . UNTIL IT EXPENDED ITS ENERGY ON THE FIRER.
I CAN'T LEAVE BEFORE I FINISH OFF THE GUARDS HERE, AND DESTROY THESE WEAPONS.

I HAVE YOU NOW . . .
9
6

HEAT BEAM. LUCKY IT WASN'T A HEAD SHOT.
DUCK AND RUN ALL YOU LIKE—I'LL FRY YOU ANYWAY.


HE'S RIGHT . . . UNLESS . . . !


FRY . . .


ACER SWITCHED ON HIS LASER HOMING KNIFE—
DIE—RENEGADE!

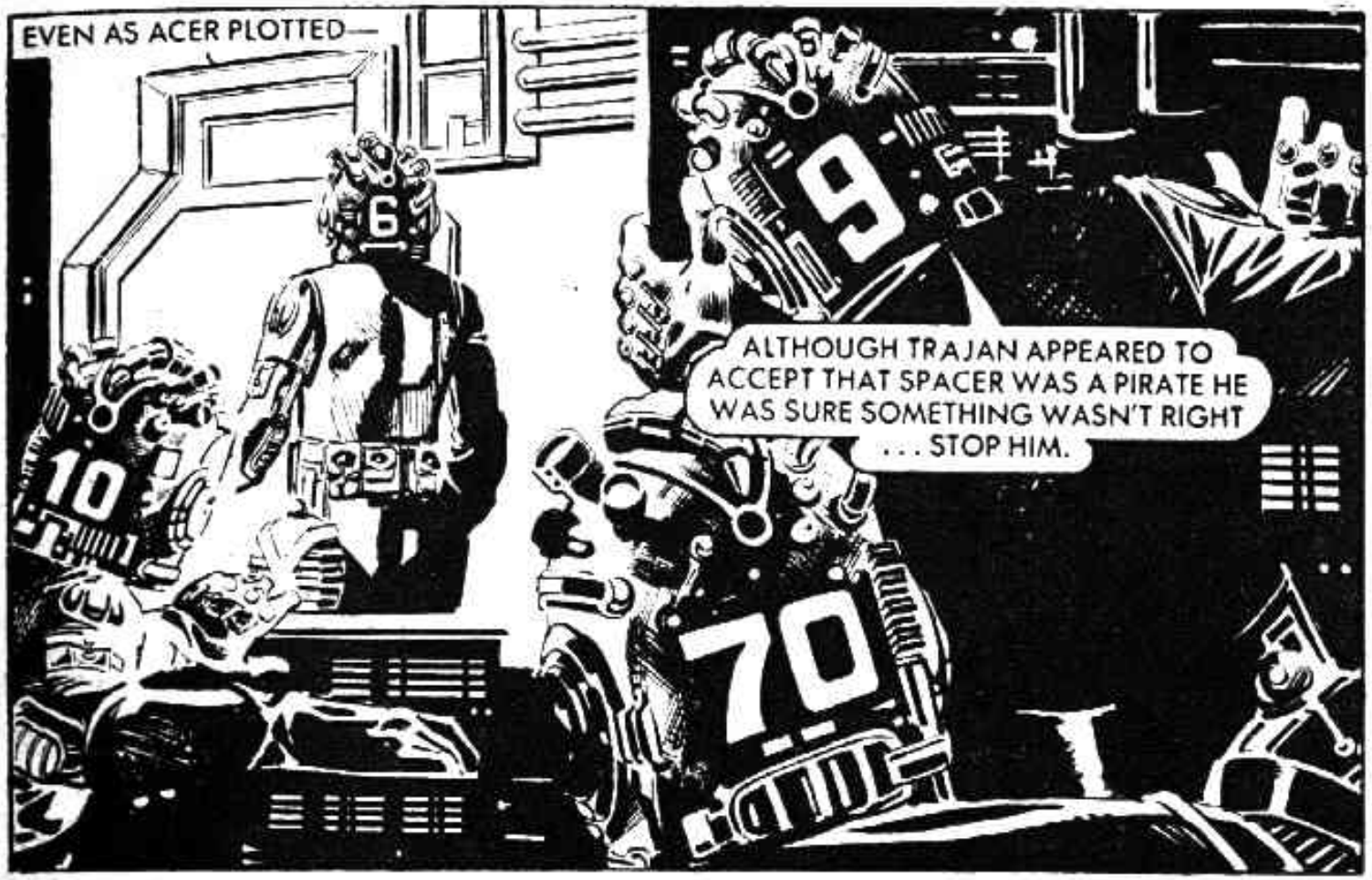
RIGHT ON TARGET.

HE'S DEAD!

ACER REMOVED A SMALL MEDICAL SWAB FROM HIS BELT, TO APPLY TO THE MICROWAVE RADIATION BURN.
CELL-REGENERATION IS A PAINFUL BUSINESS.

NOW THAT MY WOUND'S HEALED, I'LL FINISH THE JOB.
YOU WON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT!

HELVAL'S POST WAS OUTSIDE THE WEAPONWORLD —
SATURN . . . IT'S COLD OUT HERE.
ACER WAS WORKING OUT HOW TO SABOTAGE THE ARSENAL.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ALTHOUGH TRAJAN APPEARED TO ACCEPT THAT SPACER WAS A PIRATE HE WAS SURE SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT . . . STOP HIM.

FREEZE . . . OR YOUR BRAINS GET VAPED.
SPACE! I MUST HAVE BEEN WATCHED.

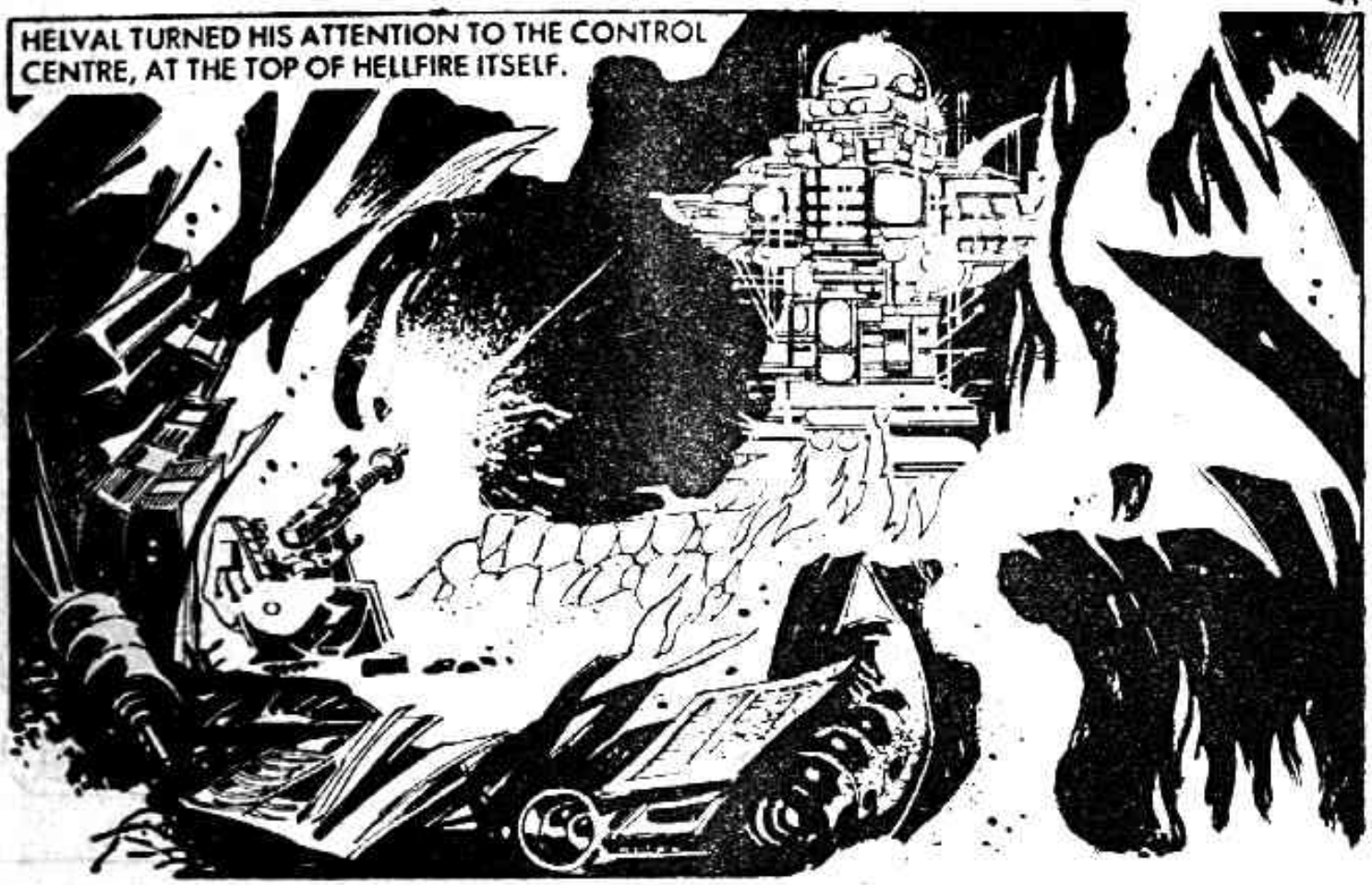
A LETHAL NERVE-GAS WAS RELEASED ON DETONATION.
I HOPE THE INJECTION I WAS GIVEN AT SPACE CORPS HQ IMMUNISED ME PROPERLY.
HE'S FINISHED!

SOMETHING'S WRONG IN THERE. OPEN THAT DOOR.

THE DOOR WON'T HOLD THEM FOR VERY LONG. I MAY NOT HAVE TIME TO SET THE CHARGES.

OUTSIDE HELVAL WAS READY TO START HIS SABOTAGE—
I'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH FOR ACER—TIME TO START MY OWN FIREWORK DISPLAY.

HELVAL TO GANDAR . . . I AM ATTACKING HELLFIRE . . . REQUEST ASSISTANCE—ALERT THULE.
HELVAL TURNED HIS CANNON ON THE OTHERS.


HELVAL TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE CONTROL CENTRE, AT THE TOP OF HELLFIRE ITSELF.

WE'RE UNDER ATTACK! CUT OFF ALL POWER TO EXTERNAL WEAPONRY.

BACK INSIDE HELLFIRE —
STOP! THIS'LL HAVE TO WAIT. SOMETHING'S WRONG UP IN THE CONTROL CENTRE—WE'D BETTER GET UP THERE.

HELVAL'S BARRAGE WAS CAUSING HAVOC—

LEFT ALONE, ACER FINISHED HIS TASK.
HELVAL . . . I'VE SET THE CHARGES . . . STANDBY FOR A BIG BANG.
THE PROTON CANNON'S SHUT OFF . . . TIME TO CALL IN MORE HELP.

THE OBJECT THROWN BY HELVAL SHATTERED TO RELEASE A SMALL ROCKET, RACING UP INTO THE IONOSPHERE, TRANSMITTING A SINGLE WORD OVER AND OVER AGAIN . . . ATTACK . . .

AT GANDAR, THE DUTY CREWS LEAPT INTO ACTION.

WEARING A GLIDE-CHUTE, ACER SWOOPED DOWNWARDS IN SAFETY.
WELCOME BACK! I'M AFRAID WE'RE ABOUT TO BE CAPTURED—OR WORSE. UNLESS WE CAN HOLD OUT FOR LONG ENOUGH TO BE PICKED UP.

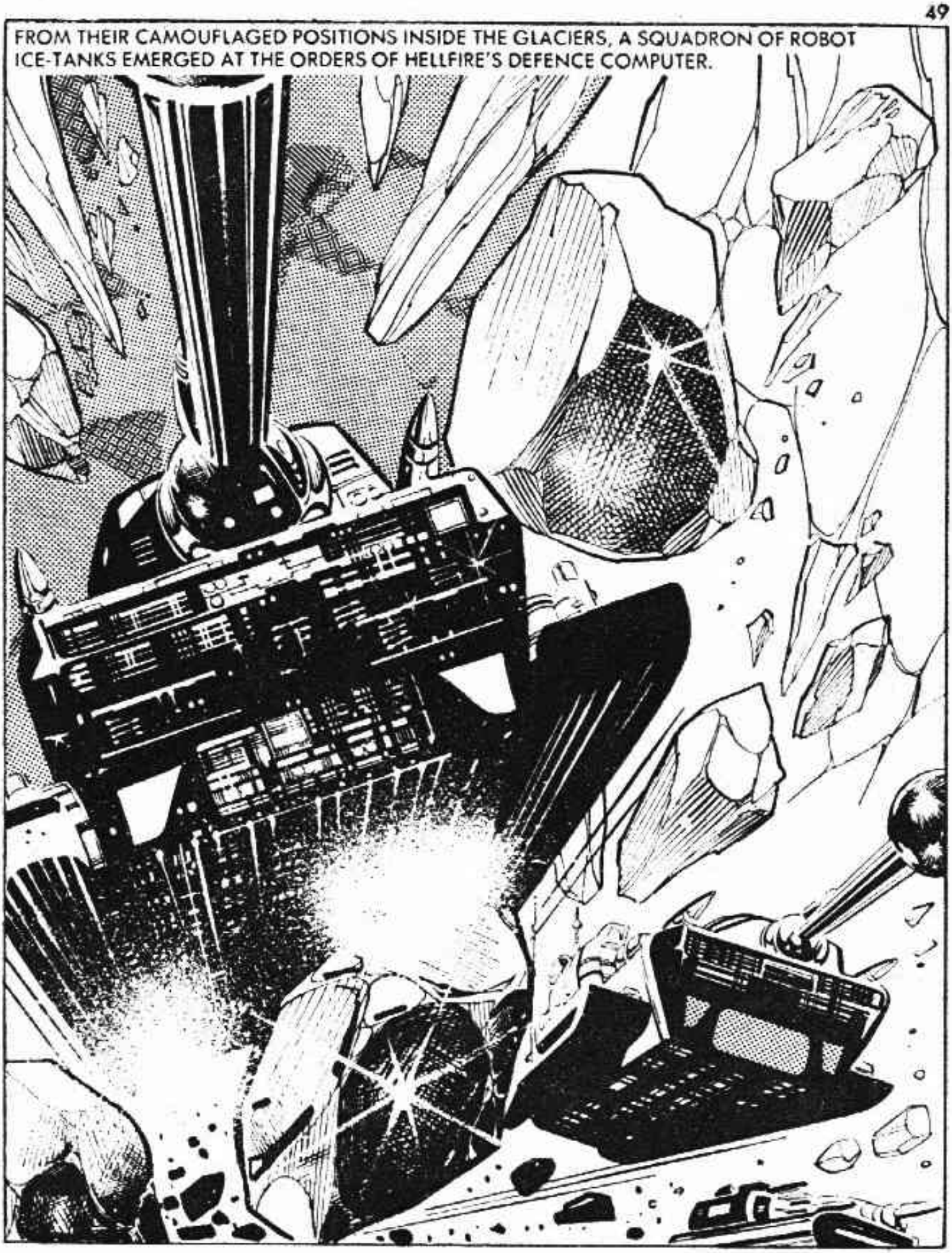
THE EXPLOSIVES PLANTED BY ACER DESTROYED THE TOP LAYER OF THE ARSENAL —
1000
70

ACER, THE FLEET'S HERE.

IN HELLFIRE CONTROL CENTRE.
GANTHUI, CAN YOU OPERATE THE DEFENCE COMPUTERS?
YES . . .

HELLFIRE'S AUTOMATIC DEFENCE SYSTEM CAME INTO PLAY—AGAINST THE SPACERS!

THE REINFORCEMENTS ONCE LANDED PREPARED FOR THE FINAL ASSAULT ON HELLFIRE.
FINE WORK SPACERS, YOU CAN RELAX NOW. WE'LL SOON HAVE EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.
NOT YET—ALL WE WANT IS FULL FIGHTING GEAR. GANTHUI IS CLEVER.


FROM THEIR CAMOUFLAGED POSITIONS INSIDE THE GLACIERS, A SQUADRON OF ROBOT ICE-TANKS EMERGED AT THE ORDERS OF HELLFIRE'S DEFENCE COMPUTER.

INSIDE HELLFIRE, GANTHUI AND TRAJAN PLANNED—
ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS LEAVE THE FIGHTING TO THE AUTOMATICS, AND TRY TO GET TO YOUR PEOPLE'S INVASION FLEET.

AS THE SPACERS ADVANCED—
OH NO! HELLFIRE'S DEFENCE SYSTEM FINALLY RESPONDED—BUT AGAINST US!

AS THE SPACERS RETALIATED, REMNANTS OF TRAJAN'S FORCE ESCAPED.

AS THE RENEGADES SPED INTO SPACE, SPACER FIGHTERS INTERCEPTED THEM.

THE RENEGADES WERE DECIMATED.

MEANWHILE, ON THE ARCTIC ICE, SPACE CORPS TROOPS WERE ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTIES.
I WOULD HAVE TO GET CAUGHT LIKE THIS AFTER I'D EXHAUSTED MY LASER RIFLE!
SOFT SNOW! WELL, HELVAL, THIS LOOKS LIKE THE END.
AT THE LAST POSSIBLE SECOND—
WHAT THE . . ?

THE RENEGADE CRAFT'S BLOWN UP.
CLIMB ABOARD, HELVAL!
ACER!
ACER AND HELVAL HEADED BACK INTO THE ACTION.
I HOPE THIS THING MOVES FASTER THAN THOSE TANKS!

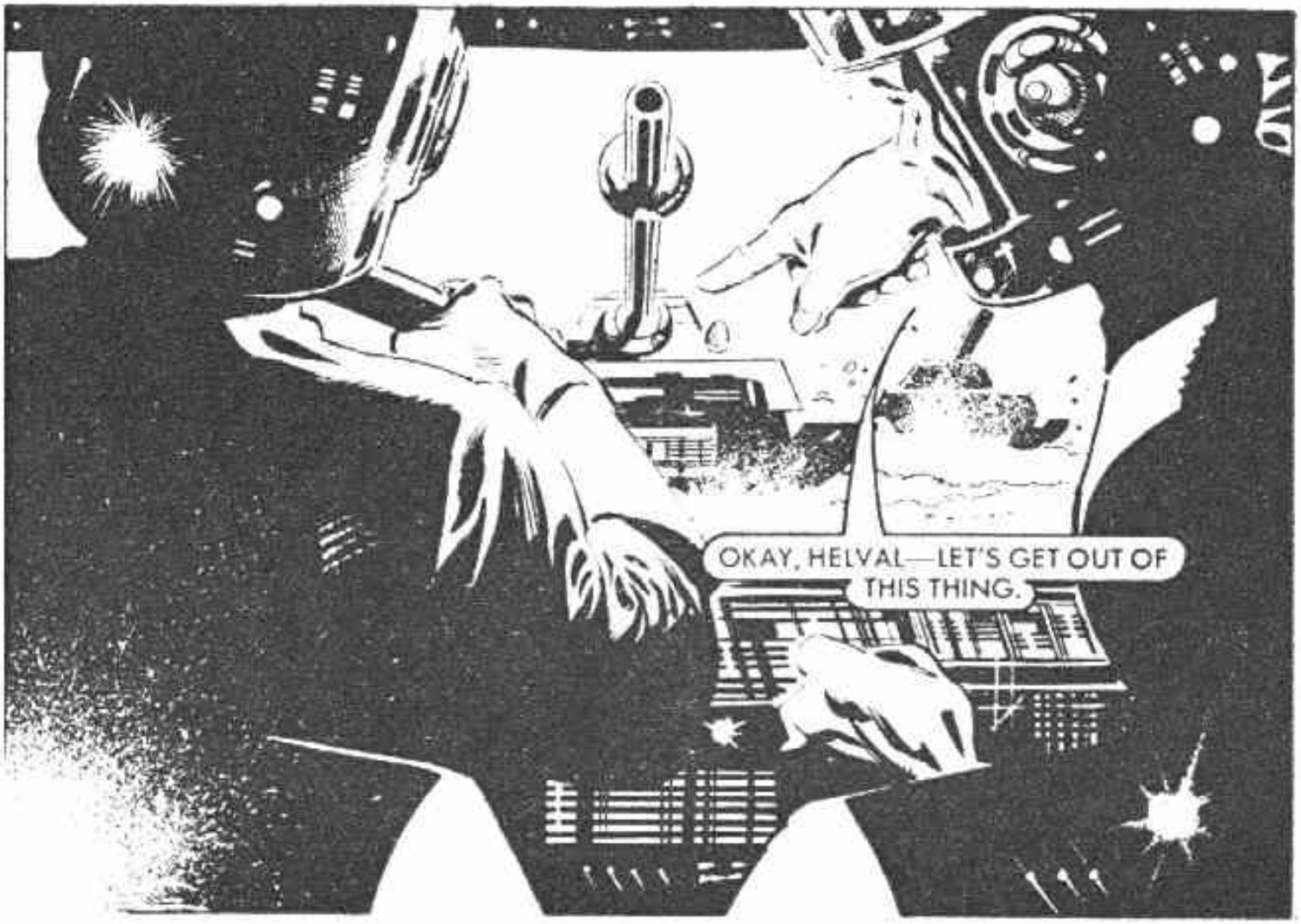
THE RENEGADE FORCES WERE VERY MUCH IN COMMAND.

SPACE! OUR SIDE DON'T SEEM TO BE DOING SO WELL.

ACER AND HELVAL WORKED THEIR WAY BEHIND THE ADVANCING TANKS.

ACER CLIMBED TO THE ROOF OF THE TRANSPORT AND AIMED AT THE LEAD TANK.

THE LEAD TANK DISINTEGRATED AS ACER AND HELVAL DROVE STRAIGHT AT THE ADVANCING TANKS.


OKAY, HELVAL—LET'S GET OUT OF THIS THING.

ACER AND HELVAL RAN FOR THEIR LIVES.

HELVAL HESITATED ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO LOB A GRENADE INTO THE HALF-TRACK TRANSPORTER AS IT SPED ON.

THE TRANSPORTER PLOUGHED INTO THE TANKS WITH A THUNDEROUS EXPLOSION . . .

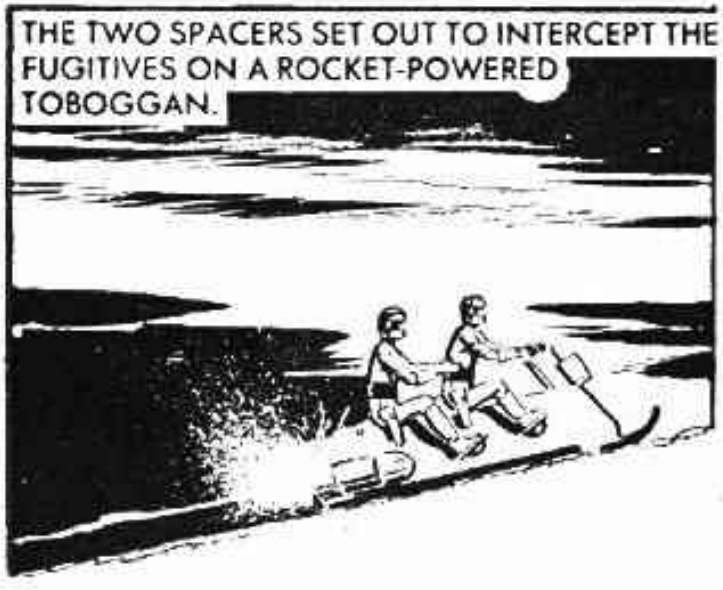
AND A CHAIN REACTION BEGAN.

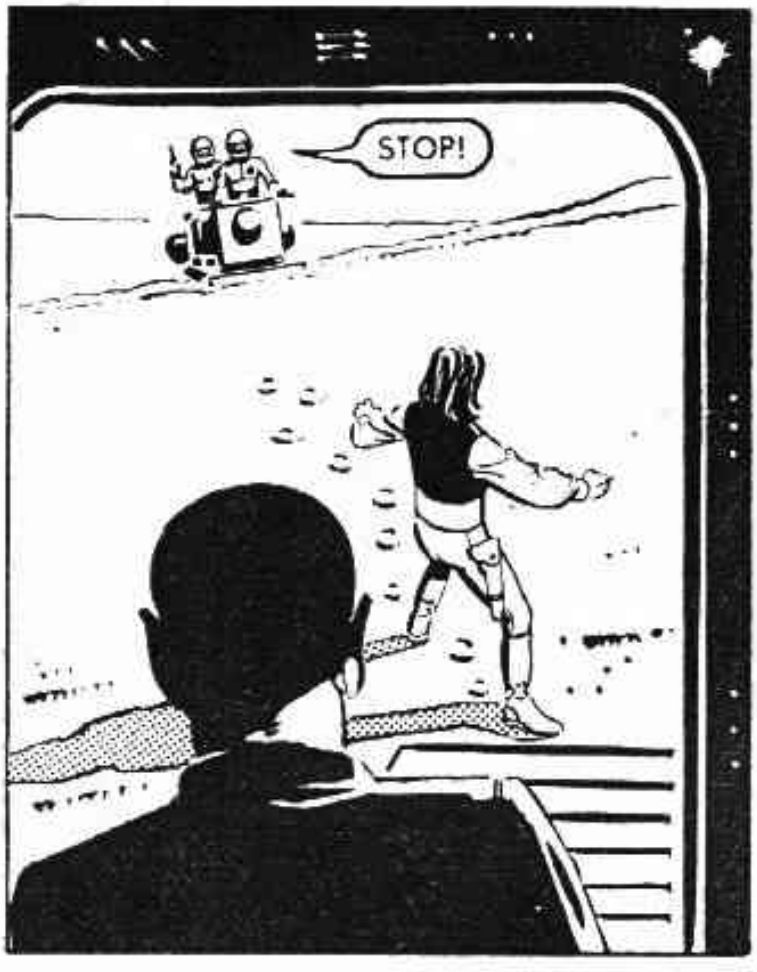
FINALLY, THE SPACERS GAINED THE UPPER HAND; AND BY CONCENTRATING THEIR FIRE DECIMATED THEIR ROBOTIC FOES.

IN THE WAR ROOM OF SPACE CORPS HQ, THE SPACE ADMINISTRATOR WITNESSED THE ARRIVAL OF A BADLY MAULED IMPERIAL CRUISER.
IT APPEARS THE PRELIMINARY REPORT WAS CORRECT. THE EMPIRE IS UNDER ALIEN ATTACK. THAT'S ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE DEFENDING FORCE. ASSEMBLE ALL WARSHIPS!

THE LAST OF THE OPPOSITION AT HELLFIRE CRUMBLED.
NOW TO FIND TRAJAN AND GANTHUI.
BUT THEIR PROGRESS WAS SEEN BY A SPACER PILOT.
THEY WERE NOT FAR AWAY.
AT LAST! A SHIP THAT HASN'T BEEN SHOT UP BY SPACERS OR TANKS.

ACER, THERE ARE TWO MEN TAKING ONE OF THOSE TINY SHIPS.
SOUNDS LIKE TRAJAN AND GANTHUI. LET'S GO HELVAL.


THE TWO SPACERS SET OUT TO INTERCEPT THE FUGITIVES ON A ROCKET-POWERED TOBOGGAN.


STOP!

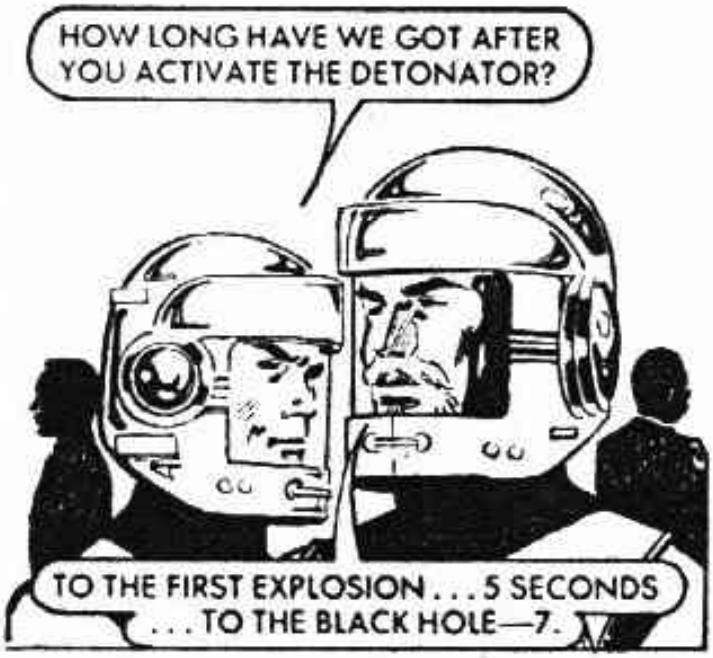
TRAJAN DESERTED HIS ALIEN ALLY IN ORDER TO MAKE HIS ESCAPE.
TOO LATE!
NO WE'RE NOT.

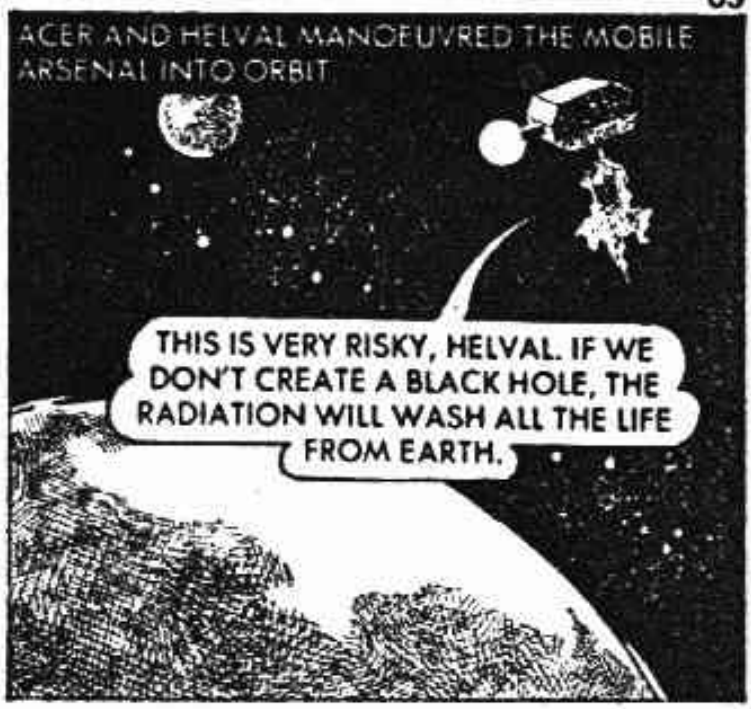
THE LANDING GEAR SANK INTO THE PARTIALLY-MELTED ICE, AND PREVENTED THE SHIP FROM TAKING OFF.

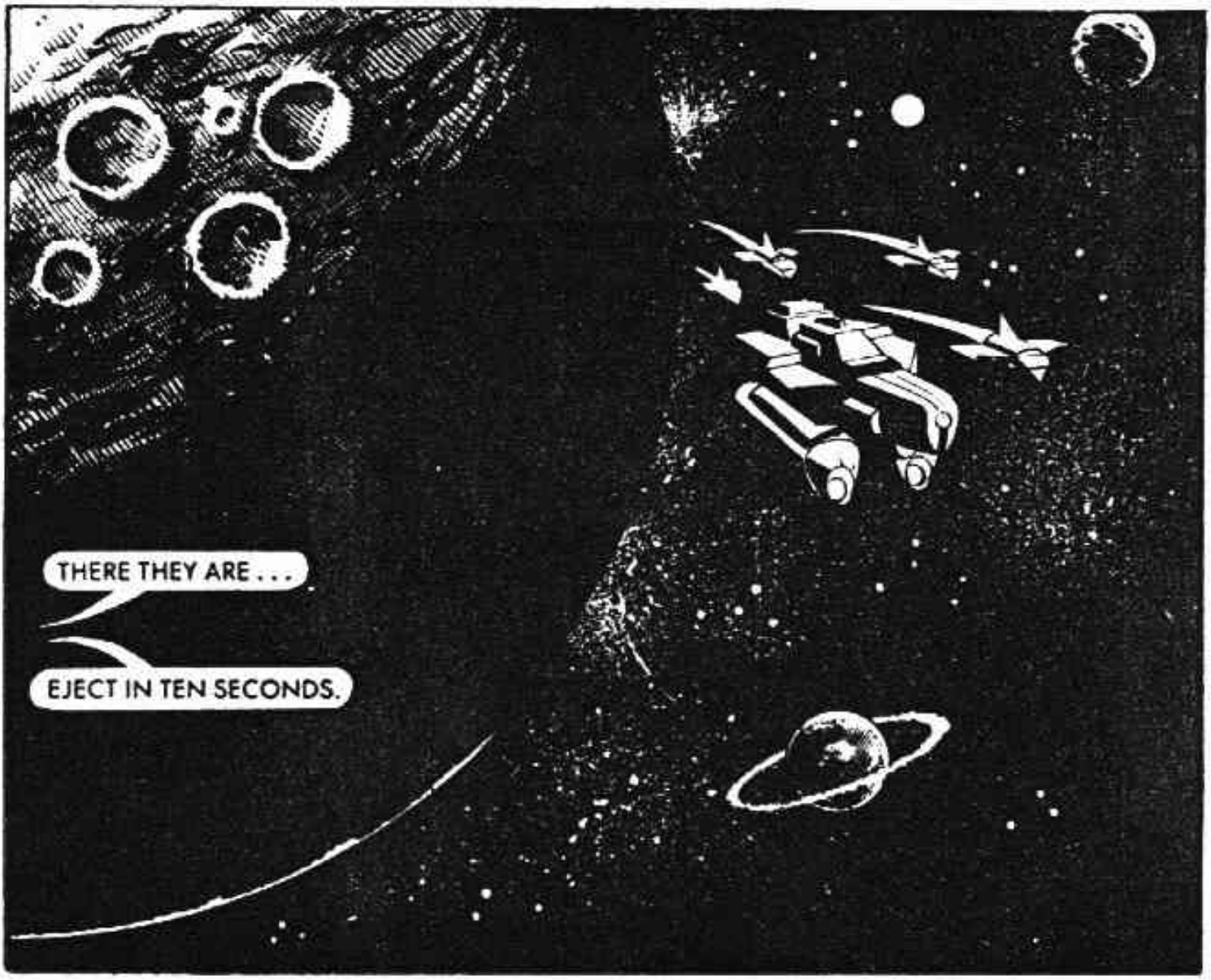
WITH HIS LAST LINE OF RETREAT CUT OFF, TRAJAN HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SURRENDER.
THERE, THAT WRAPS IT ALL UP.
NOT YET. THERE'S STILL THE ALIEN INVASION TO STOP. WE'D BETTER GET BACK TO SPACE CORPS HQ AS SOON AS WE CAN.

THE NEWS IS PRETTY GRIM. MOST OF THE IMPERIAL FLEET WAS DESTROYED. EARTH IS VIRTUALLY UNDEFENDED.
WE ARE SITTING ON THE BIGGEST ARSENAL IN THE UNIVERSE AND CAN'T USE IT.
OH, I DON'T KNOW.

THAT C-133 REPAIRSHIP COULD DO THE JOB.
WE CAN MOVE HELLFIRE INTO ORBIT . . . RIGHT IN THE PATH OF THE GANTHUI FLEET.
AND DETONATED AT THE RIGHT TIME IT WOULD CAUSE THE SAME EFFECT AS A BLACK HOLE.
THE GIANT REPAIRSHIP RIPPED THE ENTIRE HELLFIRE STRUCTURE OUT OF THE ICE-CAP.


HOW LONG HAVE WE GOT AFTER YOU ACTIVATE THE DETONATOR?
TO THE FIRST EXPLOSION . . . 5 SECONDS . . . TO THE BLACK HOLE—7.


ACER AND HELVAL MANOEUVRED THE MOBILE ARSENAL INTO ORBIT.
THIS IS VERY RISKY, HELVAL. IF WE DON'T CREATE A BLACK HOLE, THE RADIATION WILL WASH ALL THE LIFE FROM EARTH.

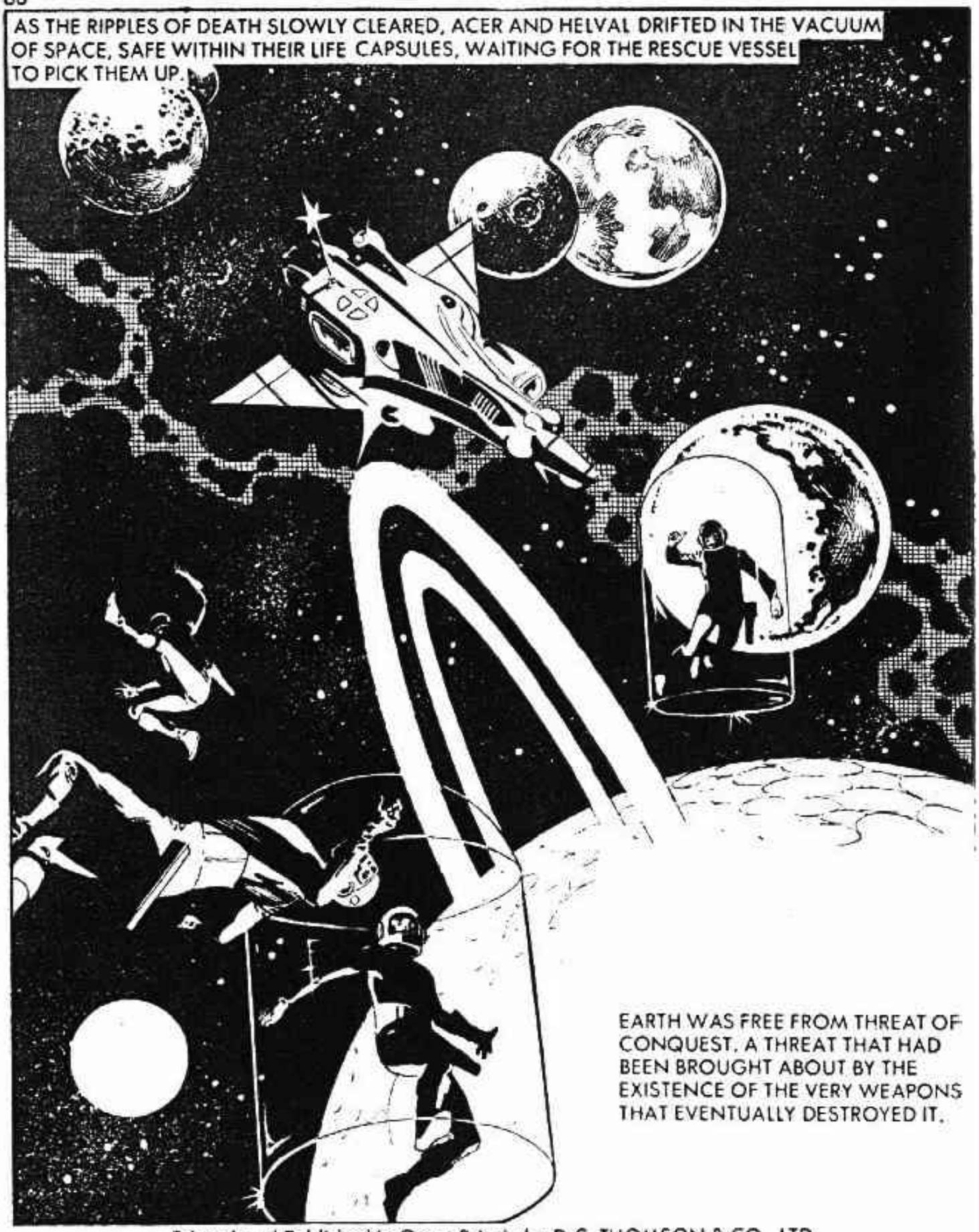

THERE THEY ARE . . .
EJECT IN TEN SECONDS.

...3...2...1...ACTIVATE.
...EJECT!

THE MYRIAD FEARFUL WEAPONS IN HELLFIRE DETONATED IN A BLINDING FLASH...

...AND IMPLODED, COMPRESSING ENERGY AND LIGHT INTO A TERRIBLE POWER SOURCE THAT RIPPED OPEN THE FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE.

THAT TAKES CARE OF GANTHUI.
AND HELLFIRE.



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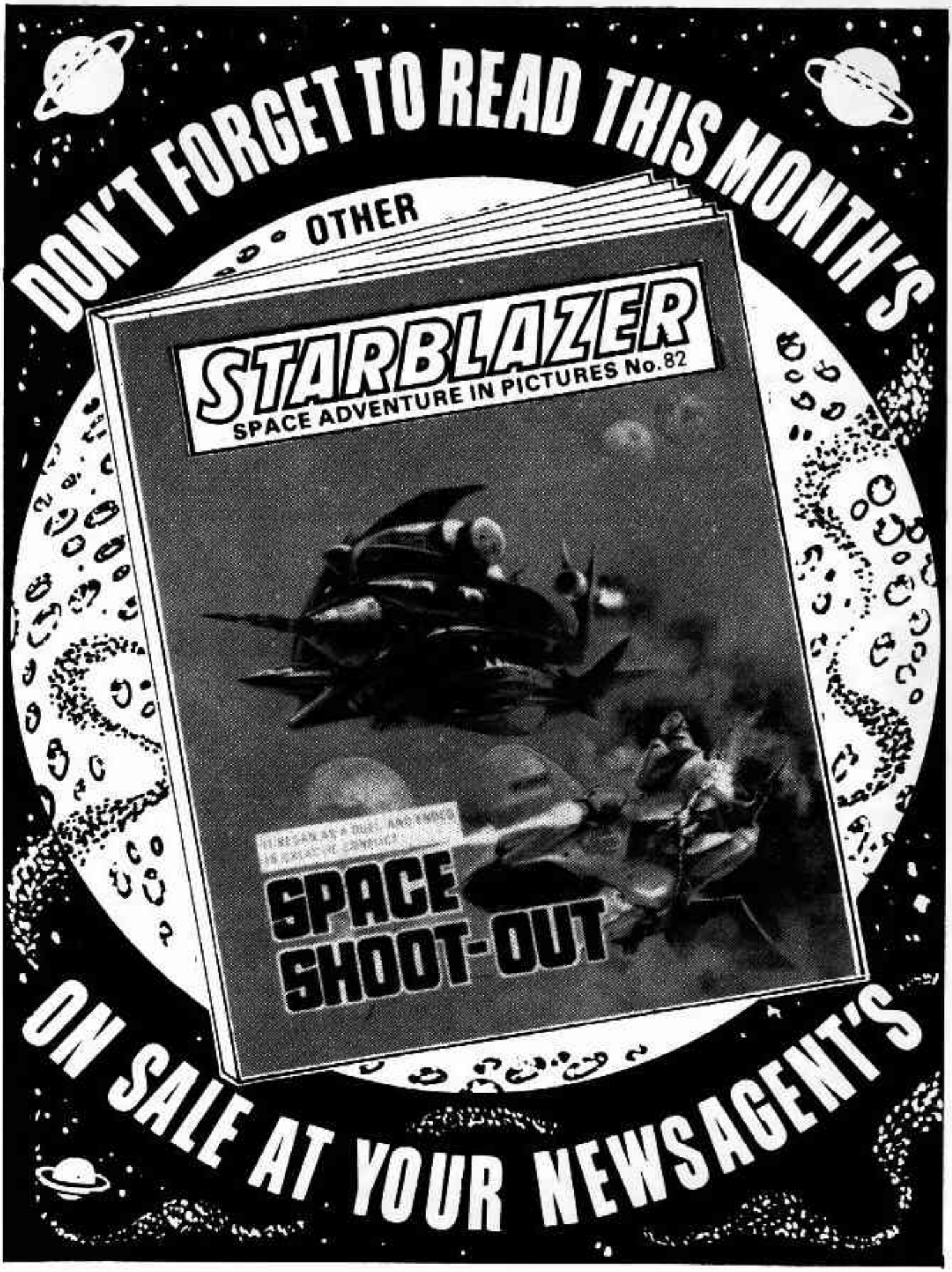
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GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
CENTAURUS

Centaurus, the half-man, half-beast of mythology, is a vast constellation lying in the Southern Hemisphere. Contained in this constellation is Alpha Centauri, a double star, and at 413 light years away, the closest star beyond the Sun.

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